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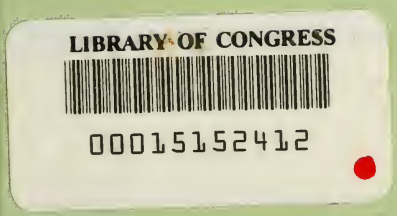

The Riverside Literature Series

A MOOSEHEAD JOURNAL
MY GARDEN ACQUAINTANCE
A GOOD WORD FOR WINTER

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

WITH NOTES

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
Boston: 4 Park Street; New York: 85 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 378-388 Wabash Avenue
The Riverside Press, Cambridge

PS 2383
.H72

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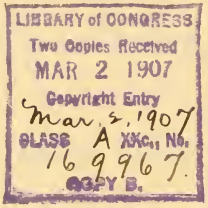

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A MOOSEHEAD JOURNAL

A MOOSEHEAD JOURNAL

1853

ADDRESSED TO THE EDELMANN STORG AT THE BAGNI DI LUCCA.

THURSDAY, 11*th August*. — I knew as little yesterday of the interior of Maine as the least penetrating person knows of the inside of that great social millstone which, driven by the river Time, sets imperatively agoing the several wheels of our individual activities. Born while Maine was still a province of native Massachusetts, I was as much a foreigner to it as yourself, my dear Storg. I had seen many lakes, ranging from that of Virgil's Cumæan to that of Scott's Caledonian Lady; but Moosehead, within two days of me, had never enjoyed the profit of being mirrored in my retina. At the sound of the name, no reminiscential atoms (according to Kenelm Digby's Theory of Association, — as good as any) stirred and marshalled themselves in my brain. The truth is, we think lightly of Nature's penny shows, and estimate what we see by the cost of the ticket. Empedocles gave

his life for a pit-entrance to Ætna, and no doubt found his account in it. Accordingly, the clean face of Cousin Bull is imaged patronizingly in Lake George, and Loch Lomond glasses the hurried countenance of Jonathan, diving deeper in the streams of European association (and coming up drier) than any other man. Or is the cause of our not caring to see what is equally within the reach of all our neighbors to be sought in that aristocratic principle so deeply implanted in human nature? I knew a pauper graduate who always borrowed a black coat, and came to eat the Commencement dinner, — not that it was better than the one which daily graced the board of the public institution in which he hibernated (so to speak) during the other three hundred and sixty-four days of the year, save in this one particular, that none of his eleemosynary fellow-commoners could eat it. If there are unhappy men who wish that they were as the Babe Unborn, there are more who would aspire to the lonely distinction of being that other figurative personage, the Oldest Inhabitant. You remember the charming irresolution of our dear Esthwaite, (like Macheath between his two doxies,) divided between his theory that he is under thirty, and his pride at being the only one of us who witnessed the September gale and the rejoicings at the Peace? Nineteen years ago I was walking through the Franconia Notch, and stopped to chat with a hermit, who fed with gradual logs the unwearied teeth of a saw-mill. As the strident steel slit off the *slabs* of the log, so did the less willing

machine of talk, acquiring a steadier up-and-down motion, pare away that outward bark of conversation which protects the core, and which, like other bark, has naturally most to do with the weather, the season, and the heat of the day. At length I asked him the best point of view for the Old Man of the Mountain.

"Dunno, — never see it."

Too young and too happy either to feel or affect the Horatian indifference, I was sincerely astonished, and I expressed it.

The log-compelling man attempted no justification, but after a little asked, "Come from Baws'n?"

"Yes" (with peninsular pride).

"Goodle to see in the vycinity o' Baws'n."

"Oh, yes!" I said; and I thought, — see Boston and die! see the State-Houses, old and new, the caterpillar wooden bridges crawling with innumerable legs across the flats of Charles; see the Common, — largest park, doubtless, in the world, — with its files of trees planted as if by a drill-sergeant, and then for your *nunc dimittis!*

"I should like, 'awl, I *should* like to stan' on Bunker Hill. You 've ben there offen, likely?"

"N-o-o," unwillingly, seeing the little end of the horn in clear vision at the terminus of this Socratic perspective.

"'Awl, my young frien', you 've larned neow thet wut a man *kin* see any day for nawthin', childern half price, he never *doos* see. Nawthin' pay, nawthin' vally."

With this modern instance of a wise saw, I departed, deeply revolving these things with myself, and convinced that, whatever the ratio of population, the average amount of human nature to the square mile differs little the world over. I thought of it when I saw people upon the Pincian wondering at the alchemist sun, as if he never burned the leaden clouds to gold in sight of Charles Street. I thought of it when I found eyes first discovering at Mont Blanc how beautiful snow was. As I walked on, I said to myself, There is one exception, wise hermit, — it is just these *gratis* pictures which the poet puts in his show-box, and which we all gladly pay Wordsworth and the rest for a peep at. The divine faculty is to see what everybody can look at.

While every well-informed man in Europe, from the barber down to the diplomatist, has his view of the Eastern Question, why should I not go personally down East and see for myself? Why not, like Tancred, attempt my own solution of the Mystery of the Orient, — doubly mysterious when you begin the two words with capitals? You know my way of doing things, to let them simmer in my mind gently for months, and at last do them *impromptu* in a kind of desperation, driven by the Eumenides of unfulfilled purpose. So, after talking about Moosehead till nobody believed me capable of going thither, I found myself at the Eastern Railway station. The only event of the journey hither (I am now at Waterville) was a boy hawking exhilaratingly the last great railroad smash, —

thirteen lives lost, — and no doubt devoutly wishing there had been fifty. This having a mercantile interest in horrors, holding stock, as it were, in murder, misfortune, and pestilence, must have an odd effect on the human mind. The birds of ill-omen, at whose sombre flight the rest of the world turn pale, are the ravens which bring food to this little outcast in the wilderness. If this lad give thanks for daily bread, it would be curious to inquire what that phrase represents to his understanding. If there ever be a plum in it, it is Sin or Death that puts it in. Other details of my dreadful ride I will spare you. Suffice it that I arrived here in safety, — in complexion like an Ethiopian serenader half got-up, and so broiled and peppered that I was more like a devilled kidney than anything else I can think of.

10 P. M. — The civil landlord and neat chamber at the "Elmwood House" were very grateful, and after tea I set forth to explore the town. It has a good chance of being pretty; but, like most American towns, it is in a hobbledehoy age, growing yet, and one cannot tell what may happen. A child with great promise of beauty is often spoiled by its second teeth. There is something agreeable in the sense of completeness which a walled town gives one. It is entire, like a crystal, — a work which man has succeeded in finishing. I think the human mind pines more or less where everything is new, and is better for a diet of stale bread. The number of Americans who visit the Old World, and the deep inspirations with which they breathe

the air of antiquity, as if their mental lungs had been starved with too thin an atmosphere, is beginning to afford matter of speculation to observant Europeans. For my own part, I never saw a house which I thought old enough to be torn down. It is too like that Scythian fashion of knocking old people on the head. I cannot help thinking that the indefinable something which we call *character* is cumulative, — that the influence of the same climate, scenery, and associations for several generations is necessary to its gathering head, and that the process is disturbed by continual change of place. The American is nomadic in religion, in ideas, in morals, and leaves his faith and opinions with as much indifference as the house in which he was born. However, we need not bother: Nature takes care not to leave out of the great heart of society either of its two ventricles of hold-back and go-ahead.

It seems as if every considerable American town must have its one specimen of everything, and so there is a college in Waterville, the buildings of which are three in number, of brick, and quite up to the average ugliness which seems essential in edifices of this description. Unhappily, they do not reach that extreme of ugliness where it and beauty come together in the clasp of fascination. We erect handsomer factories for cottons, woollens, and steam-engines, than for doctors, lawyers, and parsons. The truth is, that, till our struggle with nature is over, till this shaggy hemisphere is tamed and subjugated, the workshop will be the college

whose degrees will be most valued. Moreover, steam has made travel so easy that the great university of the world is open to all comers, and the old cloister system is falling astern. Perhaps it is only the more needed, and, were I rich, I should like to found a few lazyships in my Alma Mater as a kind of counterpoise. The Anglo-Saxon race has accepted the primal curse as a blessing, has deified work, and would not have thanked Adam for abstaining from the apple. They would have dammed the four rivers of Paradise, substituted cotton for fig-leaves among the antediluvian populations, and commended man's first disobedience as a wise measure of political economy. But to return to our college. We cannot have fine buildings till we are less in a hurry. We snatch an education like a meal at a railroad-station. Just in time to make us dyspeptic, the whistle shrieks, and we must rush, or lose our places in the great train of life. Yet noble architecture is one element of patriotism, and an eminent one of culture, the finer portions of which are taken in by unconscious absorption through the pores of the mind from the surrounding atmosphere. I suppose we must wait, for we are a great bivouac as yet, rather than a nation on the march from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and pitch tents instead of building houses. Our very villages seem to be in motion, following westward the bewitching music of some Pied Piper of Hamelin. We still feel the great push toward sundown given to the peoples somewhere in the gray dawn of history. The cliff-swallow alone of all animated nature emigrates eastward.

Friday, 12*th*. — The coach leaves Waterville at five o'clock in the morning, and one must breakfast in the dark at a quarter past four, because a train starts at twenty minutes before five, — the passengers by both conveyances being pastured gregariously. So one must be up at half past three. The primary geological formations contain no trace of man, and it seems to me that these eocene periods of the day are not fitted for sustaining the human forms of life. One of the Fathers held that the sun was created to be worshipped at his rising by the Gentiles. The more reason that Christians (except, perhaps, early Christians) should abstain from these heathenish ceremonials. As one arriving by an early train is welcomed by a drowsy maid with the sleep scarce brushed out of her hair, and finds empty grates and polished mahogany, on whose arid plains the pioneers of breakfast have not yet encamped, so a person waked thus unseasonably is sent into the world before his faculties are up and dressed to serve him. It might have been for this reason that my stomach resented for several hours a piece of fried beefsteak which I forced upon it, or, more properly speaking, a piece of that leathern conveniency which in these regions assumes the name. You will find it as hard to believe, my dear Storg, as that quarrel of the Sorbonists, whether one should say *ego amat* or no, that the use of the gridiron is unknown hereabout, and so near a river named after St. Lawrence, too!

To-day has been the hottest day of the season,

yet our drive has not been unpleasant. For a considerable distance we followed the course of the Sebasticook River, a pretty stream with alternations of dark brown pools and wine-colored rapids. On each side of the road the land had been cleared, and little one-story farm-houses were scattered at intervals. But the stumps still held out in most of the fields, and the tangled wilderness closed in behind, striped here and there with the slim white trunks of the elm. As yet only the edges of the great forest have been nibbled away. Sometimes a root-fence stretched up its bleaching antlers, like the trophies of a giant hunter. Now and then the houses thickened into an unsocial-looking village, and we drove up to the grocery to leave and take a mail-bag, stopping again presently to water the horses at some pallid little tavern, whose one red-curtained eye (the bar-room) had been put out by the inexorable thrust of Maine Law. Had Shenstone travelled this road, he would never have written that famous stanza of his; had Johnson, he would never have quoted it. They are to real inns as the skull of Yorick to his face. Where these villages occurred at a distance from the river, it was difficult to account for them. On the river-bank, a saw-mill or a tannery served as a logical premise, and saved them from total inconsequentiality. As we trailed along, at the rate of about four miles an hour, it was discovered that one of our mail-bags was missing. "Guess somebody 'll pick it up," said the driver coolly; "'t any rate, likely there 's nothin' in it." Who knows how

long it took some Elam D. or Zebulon K. to compose the missive intrusted to that vagrant bag, and how much longer to persuade Pamela Grace or Sophronia Melissa that it had really and truly been written? The discovery of our loss was made by a tall man who sat next to me on the top of the coach, every one of whose senses seemed to be prosecuting its several investigation as we went along. Presently, sniffing gently, he remarked: "'Pears to me 's though I smelt sunthin'. Ain't the aix het, think?" The driver pulled up, and, sure enough, the off fore-wheel was found to be smoking. In three minutes he had snatched a rail from the fence, made a lever, raised the coach, and taken off the wheel, bathing the hot axle and box with water from the river. It was a pretty spot, and I was not sorry to lie under a beech-tree (Tityrus-like, meditating over my pipe) and watch the operations of the fire-annihilator. I could not help contrasting the ready helpfulness of our driver, all of whose wits were about him, current, and redeemable in the specie of action on emergency, with an incident of travel in Italy, where, under a somewhat similar stress of circumstances, our *vetturino* had nothing for it but to dash his hat on the ground and call on Sant' Antonio, the Italian Hercules.

There being four passengers for the Lake, a vehicle called a mud-wagon was detailed at Newport for our accommodation. In this we jolted and rattled along at a livelier pace than in the coach. As we got farther north, the country (especially

the hills) gave evidence of longer cultivation. About the thriving town of Dexter we saw fine farms and crops. The houses, too, became prettier; hop-vines were trained about the doors, and hung their clustering thyrsi over the open windows. A kind of wild rose (called by the country folk the primrose) and asters were planted about the door-yards, and orchards, commonly of natural fruit, added to the pleasant home-look. But everywhere we could see that the war between the white man and the forest was still fierce, and that it would be a long while yet before the axe was buried. The haying being over, fires blazed or smouldered against the stumps in the fields, and the blue smoke widened slowly upward through the quiet August atmosphere. It seemed to me that I could hear a sigh now and then from the immemorial pines, as they stood watching these campfires of the inexorable invader. Evening set in, and, as we crunched and crawled up the long gravelly hills, I sometimes began to fancy that Nature had forgotten to make the corresponding descent on the other side. But erelong we were rushing down at full speed; and, inspired by the dactylic beat of the horses' hoofs, I essayed to repeat the opening lines of Evangeline. At the moment I was beginning, we plunged into a hollow, where the soft clay had been overcome by a road of unhewn logs. I got through one line to this corduroy accompaniment, somewhat as a country choir stretches a short metre on the Procrustean rack of a long-drawn tune. The result was like this: —

"Thihis ihis thehe fohorest prihihimeheval; thehe murhurmuring pihines hahand thehe hehemlohocks!"

At a quarter past eleven, P. M., we reached Greenville, (a little village which looks as if it had dripped down from the hills, and settled in the hollow at the foot of the lake,) having accomplished seventy-two miles in eighteen hours. The tavern was totally extinguished. The driver rapped upon the bar-room window, and after a while we saw heat-lightnings of unsuccessful matches followed by a low grumble of vocal thunder, which I am afraid took the form of imprecation. Presently there was a great success, and the steady blur of lighted tallow succeeded the fugitive brilliance of the pine. A hostler fumbled the door open, and stood staring at but not seeing us, with the sleep sticking out all over him. We at last contrived to launch him, more like an insensible missile than an intelligent or intelligible being, at the slumbering landlord, who came out wide-awake, and welcomed us as so many half-dollars, — twenty-five cents each for bed, *ditto* breakfast. O Shenstone, Shenstone! The only roost was in the garret, which had been made into a single room, and contained eleven double-beds, ranged along the walls. It was like sleeping in a hospital. However, nice customs curtsy to eighteen-hour rides, and we slept.

Saturday, 13*th*. — This morning I performed my toilet in the bar-room, where there was an abundant supply of water, and a halo of interested spectators. After a sufficient breakfast, we embarked on the little steamer Moosehead, and were

soon throbbing up the lake. The boat, it appeared, had been chartered by a party, this not being one of her regular trips. Accordingly we were mulcted in twice the usual fee, the philosophy of which I could not understand. However, it always comes easier to us to comprehend why we receive than why we pay. I dare say it was quite clear to the captain. There were three or four clearings on the western shore; but after passing these, the lake became wholly primeval, and looked to us as it did to the first adventurous Frenchman who paddled across it. Sometimes a cleared point would be pink with the blossoming willow-herb, "a cheap and excellent substitute" for heather, and, like all such, not *quite* so good as the real thing. On all sides rose deep-blue mountains, of remarkably graceful outline, and more fortunate than common in their names. There were the Big and Little Squaw, the Spencer and Lily-bay Mountains. It was debated whether we saw Katahdin or not, (perhaps more useful as an intellectual exercise than the assured vision would have been), and presently Mount Kineo rose abruptly before us, in shape not unlike the island of Capri. Mountains are called great natural features, and why they should not retain their names long enough for these also to become naturalized, it is hard to say. Why should every new surveyor rechristen them with the gubernatorial patronymics of the current year? They are geological noses, and as they are aquiline or pug, indicate terrestrial idiosyncrasies. A cosmical physiognomist, after a glance at them, will

draw no vague inference as to the character of the country. The word *nose* is no better than any other word; but since the organ has got that name, it is convenient to keep it. Suppose we had to label our facial prominences every season with the name of our provincial governor, how should *we* like it? If the old names have no other meaning, they have that of age; and, after all, meaning is a plant of slow growth, as every reader of Shakespeare knows. It is well enough to call mountains after their discoverers, for Nature has a knack of throwing doublets, and somehow contrives it that discoverers have good names. Pike's Peak is a curious hit in this way. But these surveyors' names have no natural *stick* in them. They remind one of the epithets of poetasters, which peel off like a badly gummed postage-stamp. The early settlers did better, and there is something pleasant in the sound of Graylock, Saddleback, and Great Haystack.

> "I love those names
> Wherewith the exiled farmer tames
> Nature down to companionship
> With his old world's more homely mood,
> And strives the shaggy wild to clip
> In the arms of familiar habitude."

It is possible that Mount Marcy and Mount Hitchcock may sound as well hereafter as Hellespont and Peloponnesus, when the heroes, their namesakes, have become mythic with antiquity. But that is to look forward a great way. I am no fanatic for Indian nomenclature, — the name of my native district having been Pigsgusset, — but let us at least agree on names for ten years.

There were a couple of loggers on board, in red flannel shirts, and with rifles. They were the first I had seen, and I was interested in their appearance. They were tall, well-knit men, straight as Robin Hood, and with a quiet, self-contained look that pleased me. I fell into talk with one of them.

"Is there a good market for the farmers here in the woods?" I asked.

"None better. They can sell what they raise at their doors, and for the best of prices. The lumberers want it all, and more."

"It must be a lonely life. But then we all have to pay more or less life for a living."

"Well, it *is* lonesome. Should n't like it. After all, the best crop a man can raise is a good crop of society. We don't live none too long, anyhow; and without society a fellow could n't tell more 'n half the time whether he was alive or not."

This speech gave me a glimpse into the life of the lumberers' camp. It was plain that there a man would soon find out how much alive he was, — there he could learn to estimate his quality, weighed in the nicest self-adjusting balance. The best arm at the axe or the paddle, the surest eye for a road or for the weak point of a *jam*, the steadiest foot upon the squirming log, the most persuasive voice to the tugging oxen, — all these things are rapidly settled, and so an aristocracy is evolved from this democracy of the woods, for good old mother Nature speaks Saxon still, and with her either Canning or Kenning means King.

A string of five loons was flying back and forth in long, irregular zigzags, uttering at intervals their wild, tremulous cry, which always seems far away, like the last faint pulse of echo dying among the hills, and which is one of those few sounds that, instead of disturbing solitude, only deepen and confirm it. On our inland ponds they are usually seen in pairs, and I asked if it were common to meet five together. My question was answered by a queer-looking old man, chiefly remarkable for a pair of enormous cowhide boots, over which large blue trousers of frocking strove in vain to crowd themselves.

"Wahl, 't ain't ushil," said he, "and it 's called a sign o' rain comin', that is."

"Do you think it will rain?"

With the caution of a veteran *auspex*, he evaded a direct reply. "Wahl, they *du* say it 's a sign o' rain comin'," said he.

I discovered afterward that my interlocutor was Uncle Zeb. Formerly, every New England town had its representative uncle. He was not a pawnbroker, but some elderly man who, for want of more defined family ties, had gradually assumed this avuncular relation to the community, inhabiting the border-land between respectability and the almshouse, with no regular calling, but ready for odd jobs at haying, wood-sawing, whitewashing, associated with the demise of pigs and the ailments of cattle, and possessing as much patriotism as might be implied in a devoted attachment to "New England" — with a good deal of sugar and very little

water in it. Uncle Zeb was a good specimen of this palæozoic class, extinct among us for the most part, or surviving, like the Dodo, in the Botany Bays of society. He was ready to contribute (somewhat muddily) to all general conversation; but his chief topics were his boots and the 'Roostick war. Upon the lowlands and levels of ordinary palaver he would make rapid and unlooked-for incursions; but, provision failing, he would retreat to these two fastnesses, whence it was impossible to dislodge him, and to which he knew innumerable passes and short cuts quite beyond the conjecture of common woodcraft. His mind opened naturally to these two subjects, like a book to some favorite passage. As the ear accustoms itself to any sound recurring regularly, such as the ticking of a clock, and, without a conscious effort of attention, takes no impression from it whatever, so does the mind find a natural safeguard against this pendulum species of discourse, and performs its duties in the parliament by an unconscious reflex action, like the beating of the heart or the movement of the lungs. If talk seemed to be flagging, our Uncle would put the heel of one boot upon the toe of the other, to bring it within point-blank range, and say, "Wahl, I stump the Devil himself to make that 'ere boot hurt *my* foot," leaving us in doubt whether it were the virtue of the foot or its case which set at naught the wiles of the adversary; or, looking up suddenly, he would exclaim, "Wahl, we eat *some* beans to the 'Roostick war, I tell *you!*" When his poor old clay was wet with gin,

his thoughts and words acquired a rank flavor from it, as from too strong a fertilizer. At such times, too, his fancy commonly reverted to a prehistoric period of his life, when he singly had settled all the surrounding country, subdued the Injuns and other wild animals, and named all the towns.

We talked of the winter-camps and the life there. "The best thing is," said our Uncle, "to hear a log squeal thru the snow. Git a good, col', frosty mornin', in February say, an' take an' hitch the critters on to a log that 'll scale seven thousan', an' it 'll squeal as pooty as an'thin' *you* ever hearn, I tell *you*."

A pause.

"Lessee, — seen Cal Hutchins lately?"

"No."

"Seems to me 's though I hed n't seen Cal sence the 'Roostick war. Wahl," &c., &c.

Another pause.

"To look at them boots you 'd think they was too large; but kind o' git your foot into 'em, and they 're as easy 's a glove." (I observed that he never seemed really to get his foot in, — there was always a qualifying *kind o'*.) "Wahl, my foot can play in 'em like a young hedgehog."

By this time we had arrived at Kineo, — a flourishing village of one house, the tavern kept by 'Squire Barrows. The 'Squire is a large, hearty man, with a voice as clear and strong as a northwest wind, and a great laugh suitable to it. His table is neat and well supplied, and he waits upon it himself in the good old landlordly fashion. One

may be much better off here, to my thinking, than in one of those gigantic Columbaria which are foisted upon us patient Americans for hotels, and where one is packed away in a pigeon-hole so near the heavens that, if the comet should flirt its tail, (no unlikely thing in the month of flies,) one would run some risk of being brushed away. Here one does not pay his diurnal three dollars for an undivided five-hundredth part of the pleasure of looking at gilt gingerbread. Here one's relations are with the monarch himself, and one is not obliged to wait the slow leisure of those "attentive clerks" whose praises are sung by thankful deadheads, and to whom the slave who pays may feel as much gratitude as might thrill the heart of a brown-paper parcel toward the express-man who labels it and chucks it under his counter.

Sunday, 14*th*. — The loons were right. About midnight it began to rain in earnest, and did not hold up till about ten o'clock this morning. "This is a Maine dew," said a shaggy woodman cheerily, as he shook the water out of his wide-awake, "if it don't look out sharp, it 'll begin to rain afore it thinks on 't." The day was mostly spent within doors; but I found good and intelligent society. We should have to be shipwrecked on Juan Fernandez not to find men who knew more than we. In these travelling encounters one is thrown upon his own resources, and is worth just what he carries about him. The social currency of home, the smooth-worn coin which passes freely among friends and neighbors, is of no account. We are thrown

back upon the old system of barter; and, even with savages, we bring away only as much of the wild wealth of the woods as we carry beads of thought and experience, strung one by one in painful years, to pay for them with. A useful old jackknife will buy more than the daintiest Louis Quinze paper-folder fresh from Paris. Perhaps the kind of intelligence one gets in these out-of-the-way places is the best, — where one takes a fresh man after breakfast instead of the damp morning paper, and where the magnetic telegraph of human sympathy flashes swift news from brain to brain.

Meanwhile, at a pinch, to-morrow's weather can be discussed. The augury from the flight of birds is favorable, — the loons no longer prophesying rain. The wind also is hauling round to the right quarter, according to some, — to the wrong, if we are to believe others. Each man has his private barometer of hope, the mercury in which is more or less sensitive, and the opinion vibrant with its rise or fall. Mine has an index which can be moved mechanically. I fixed it at *set fair*, and resigned myself. I read an old volume of the Patent-Office Report on Agriculture, and stored away a beautiful pile of facts and observations for future use, which the current of occupation, at its first freshet, would sweep quietly off to blank oblivion. Practical application is the only mordant which will set things in the memory. Study, without it, is gymnastics, and not work, which alone will get intellectual bread. One learns more metaphysics from a single temptation than from all the philoso-

phers. It is curious, though, how tyrannical the habit of reading is, and what shifts we make to escape thinking. There is no bore we dread being left alone with so much as our own minds. I have seen a sensible man study a stale newspaper in a country tavern, and husband it as he would an old shoe on a raft after shipwreck. Why not try a bit of hibernation? There are few brains that would not be better for living on their own fat a little while. With these reflections, I, notwithstanding, spent the afternoon over my Report. If our own experience is of so little use to us, what a dolt is he who recommends to man or nation the experience of others! Like the mantle in the old ballad, it is always too short or too long, and exposes or trips us up. "Keep out of that candle," says old Father Miller, "or you 'll get a singeing." "Pooh, pooh, father, I 've been dipped in the new asbestos preparation," and *frozz!* it is all over with young Hopeful. How many warnings have been drawn from Pretorian bands, and Janizaries, and Mamelukes, to make Napoleon III. impossible in 1851! I found myself thinking the same thoughts over again, when we walked later on the beach and picked up pebbles. The old time-ocean throws upon its shores just such rounded and polished results of the eternal turmoil, but we only see the beauty of those we have got the headache in stooping for ourselves, and wonder at the dull brown bits of common stone with which our comrades have stuffed their pockets. Afterwards this little fable came of it.

DOCTOR LOBSTER.

A PERCH, who had the toothache, once
Thus moaned, like any human dunce:
"Why must great souls exhaust so soon
Life's thin and unsubstantial boon?
Existence on such sculpin terms,
Their vulgar loves and hard-won worms,
What is it all but dross to me,
Whose nature craves a larger sea;
Whose inches, six from head to tail,
Enclose the spirit of a whale;
Who, if great baits were still to win,
By watchful eye and fearless fin
Might with the Zodiac's awful twain
Room for a third immortal gain?
Better the crowd's unthinking plan,
The hook, the jerk, the frying-pan!
O Death, thou ever roaming shark,
Ingulf me in eternal dark!"

The speech was cut in two by flight:
A real shark had come in sight;
No metaphoric monster, one
It soothes despair to call upon,
But stealthy, sidelong, grim, i-wis,
A bit of downright Nemesis;
While it recovered from the shock,
Our fish took shelter 'neath a rock:
This was an ancient lobster's house,
A lobster of prodigious *nous*,
So old that barnacles had spread
Their white encampments o'er his head,
And of experience so stupend,
His claws were blunted at the end,
Turning life's iron pages o'er,
That shut and can be oped no more.

Stretching a hospitable claw,
"At once," said he, "the point I saw;

My dear young friend, your case I rue,
Your great-great-grandfather I knew;
He was a tried and tender friend
I know, — I ate him in the end:
In this vile sea a pilgrim long,
Still my sight 's good, my memory strong;
The only sign that age is near
Is a slight deafness in this ear;
I understand your case as well
As this my old familiar shell;
This Welt-schmerz is a brand-new notion,
Come in since first I knew the ocean;
We had no radicals, nor crimes,
Nor lobster-pots, in good old times;
Your traps and nets and hooks we owe
To Messieurs Louis Blanc and Co.;
I say to all my sons and daughters,
Shun Red Republican hot waters;
No lobster ever cast his lot
Among the reds, but went to pot:
Your trouble 's in the jaw, you said?
Come, let me just nip off your head,
And, when a new one comes, the pain
Will never trouble you again:
Nay, nay, fear naught: 't is nature's law.
Four times I 've lost this starboard claw;
And still, erelong, another grew,
Good as the old, — and better too! "

The perch consented, and next day
An osprey, marketing that way,
Picked up a fish without a head,
Floating with belly up, stone dead.

MORAL.

Sharp are the teeth of ancient saws,
And sauce for goose is gander's sauce;
But perch's heads are n't lobster's claws.

Monday, 15*th*. — The morning was fine, and we were called at four o'clock. At the moment my

door was knocked at, I was mounting a giraffe with that charming *nil admirari* which characterizes dreams, to visit Prester John. *Rat-tat-tat-tat!* upon my door and upon the horn gate of dreams also. I remarked to my skowhegan (the Tâtar for giraffe-driver) that I was quite sure the animal had the *raps*, a common disease among them, for I heard a queer knocking noise inside him. It is the sound of his joints, O Tambourgi! (an Oriental term of reverence,) and proves him to be of the race of El Keirat. *Rat-tat-tat-too!* and I lost my dinner at the Prester's, embarking for a voyage to the Northwest Carry instead. Never use the word *canoe*, my dear Storg, if you wish to retain your self-respect. *Birch* is the term among us backwoodsmen. I never knew it till yesterday; but, like a true philosopher, I made it appear as if I had been intimate with it from childhood. The rapidity with which the human mind levels itself to the standard around it gives us the most pertinent warning as to the company we keep. It is as hard for most characters to stay at their own average point in all companies, as for a thermometer to say 65° for twenty-four hours together. I like this in our friend Johannes Taurus, that he carries everywhere and maintains his insular temperature, and will have everything accommodate itself to that. Shall I confess that this morning I would rather have broken the moral law, than have endangered the equipoise of the birch by my awkwardness? that I should have been prouder of a compliment to my paddling, than to have had both

my guides suppose me the author of Hamlet? Well, Cardinal Richelieu used to jump over chairs.

We were to paddle about twenty miles; but we made it rather more by crossing and recrossing the lake. Twice we landed, — once at a camp, where we found the cook alone, baking bread and gingerbread. Monsieur Soyer would have been startled a little by this shaggy professor, — this Pre-Raphaelite of cookery. He represented the *salæratus* period of the art, and his bread was of a brilliant yellow, like those cakes tinged with saffron, which hold out so long against time and the flies in little water-side shops of seaport towns, — dingy extremities of trade fit to moulder on Lethe wharf. His water was better, squeezed out of ice-cold granite in the neighboring mountains, and sent through subterranean ducts to sparkle up by the door of the camp.

"There 's nothin' so sweet an' hulsome as your *real* spring water," said Uncle Zeb, "git it pure. But it 's dreffle hard to git it that ain't got sunthin' the matter of it. Snow-water 'll burn a man's inside out, — I larned that to the 'Roostick war, — and the snow lays terrible long on some o' thes'ere hills. Me an' Eb Stiles was up old Ktahdn onct jest about this time o' year, an' we come acrost a kind o' holler like, as full o' snow as your stockin 's full o' your foot. *I* see it fust, an' took an' rammed a settin'-pole — wahl, it was all o' twenty foot into 't, an' could n't fin' no bottom. I dunno as there 's snow-water enough in this to do no hurt. I don't somehow seem to think that *real* spring-

water 's so plenty as it used to be." And Uncle Zeb, with perhaps a little over-refinement of scrupulosity, applied his lips to the Ethiop ones of a bottle of raw gin, with a kiss that drew out its very soul, — a *basia* that Secundus might have sung. He must have been a wonderful judge of water, for he analyzed this, and detected its latent snow simply by his eye, and without the clumsy process of tasting. I could not help thinking that he had made the desert his dwelling-place chiefly in order to enjoy the ministrations of this one fair spirit unmolested.

We pushed on. Little islands loomed trembling between sky and water, like hanging gardens. Gradually the filmy trees defined themselves, the aerial enchantment lost its potency, and we came up with common prose islands that had so late been magical and poetic. The old story of the attained and unattained. About noon we reached the head of the lake, and took possession of a deserted *wongen*, in which to cook and eat our dinner. No Jew, I am sure, can have a more thorough dislike of salt pork than I have in a normal state, yet I had already eaten it raw with hard bread for lunch, and relished it keenly. We soon had our tea-kettle over the fire, and before long the cover was chattering with the escaping steam, which had thus vainly begged of all men to be saddled and bridled, till James Watt one day happened to overhear it. One of our guides shot three Canada grouse, and these were turned slowly between the fire and a bit of salt pork, which dropped fatness upon them as

it fried. Although *my* fingers were certainly not made before knives and forks, yet they served as a convenient substitute for those more ancient inventions. We sat round, Turk-fashion, and ate thankfully, while a party of aborigines of the Mosquito tribe, who had camped in the *wongen* before we arrived, dined upon us. I do not know what the British Protectorate of the Mosquitoes amounts to; but, as I squatted there at the mercy of these bloodthirsty savages, I no longer wondered that the classic Everett had been stung into a willingness for war on the question.

"This 'ere 'd be about a complete place for a camp, ef there was on'y a spring o' sweet water handy. Frizzled pork goes wal, don't it? Yes, an' sets wal, too," said Uncle Zeb, and he again tilted his bottle, which rose nearer and nearer to an angle of forty-five at every gurgle. He then broached a curious dietetic theory: "The reason we take salt pork along is cos it packs handy: you git the greatest amount o' board in the smallest compass, — let alone that it 's more nourishin' than an'thin' else. It kind o' don't disgest so quick, but stays by ye, anourishin' ye all the while.

"A feller can live wal on frizzled pork an' good spring-water, git it *good*. To the 'Roostick war we did n't ask for nothin' better, — on'y beans." (*Tilt*, *tilt*, *gurgle*, *gurgle*.) Then, with an apparent feeling of inconsistency, "But then, come to git used to a particular *kind* o' spring-water, an' it makes a feller hard to suit. Most all sorts o' water taste kind o' *in*sipid away from home. Now,

I've gut a spring to my place that 's as sweet — wahl, it 's as sweet as maple sap. A feller acts about water jest as he doos about a pair o' boots. It 's all on it in gittin' wonted. Now, *them* boots," &c., &c. (*Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, smack!*)

All this while he was packing away the remains of the pork and hard bread in two large firkins. This accomplished, we reëmbarked, our uncle on his way to the birch essaying a kind of song in four or five parts, of which the words were hilarious and the tune profoundly melancholy, and which was finished, and the rest of his voice apparently jerked out of him in one sharp falsetto note, by his tripping over the root of a tree. We paddled a short distance up a brook which came into the lake smoothly through a little meadow not far off. We soon reached the Northwest Carry, and our guide, pointing through the woods, said: "That 's the Cannydy road. You can travel that clearn to Kebeck, a hunderd an' twenty mile," — a privilege of which I respectfully declined to avail myself. The offer, however, remains open to the public. The Carry is called two miles; but this is the estimate of somebody who had nothing to lug. I had a headache and all my baggage, which, with a traveller's instinct, I had brought with me. (P. S. — I did not even take the keys out of my pocket, and both my bags were wet through before I came back.) *My* estimate of the distance is eighteen thousand six hundred and seventy-four miles and three quarters, — the fraction being the part left to be travelled after one of my com-

panions most kindly insisted on relieving me of my heaviest bag. I know very well that the ancient Roman soldiers used to carry sixty pounds' weight, and all that; but I am not, and never shall be, an ancient Roman soldier, — no, not even in the miraculous Thundering Legion. Uncle Zeb slung the two provender firkins across his shoulder, and trudged along, grumbling that "he never see sech a contrairy pair as them." He had begun upon a second bottle of his "particular kind o' spring-water," and, at every rest, the gurgle of this peripatetic fountain might be heard, followed by a smack, a fragment of mosaic song, or a confused clatter with the cowhide boots, being an arbitrary symbol, intended to represent the festive dance. Christian's pack gave him not half so much trouble as the firkins gave Uncle Zeb. It grew harder and harder to sling them, and with every fresh gulp of the Batavian elixir, they got heavier. Or rather, the truth was, that his hat grew heavier, in which he was carrying on an extensive manufacture of bricks without straw. At last affairs reached a crisis, and a particularly favorable pitch offering, with a puddle at the foot of it, even *the* boots afforded no sufficient ballast, and away went our uncle, the satellite firkins accompanying faithfully his headlong flight. Did ever exiled monarch or disgraced minister find the cause of his fall in himself? Is there not always a strawberry at the bottom of our cup of life, on which we can lay all the blame of our deviations from the straight path? Till now Uncle Zeb had contrived to give a gloss

of volition to smaller stumblings and gyrations, by exaggerating them into an appearance of playful burlesque. But the present case was beyond any such subterfuges. He held a bed of justice where he sat, and then arose slowly, with a stern determination of vengeance stiffening every muscle of his face. But what would he select as the culprit? "It 's that cussed firkin," he mumbled to himself. "I never knowed a firkin cair on so, — no, not in the 'Roostehicick war. There, go long, will ye? and don't come back till you 've larned how to walk with a genelman!" And, seizing the unhappy scapegoat by the bail, he hurled it into the forest. It is a curious circumstance, that it was not the firkin containing the bottle which was thus condemned to exile.

The end of the Carry was reached at last, and, as we drew near it, we heard a sound of shouting and laughter. It came from a party of men making hay of the wild grass in Seboomok meadows, which lie around Seboomok pond, into which the Carry empties itself. Their camp was near, and our two hunters set out for it, leaving us seated in the birch on the plashy border of the pond. The repose was perfect. Another heaven hallowed and deepened the polished lake, and through that nether world the fish-hawk's double floated with balanced wings, or, wheeling suddenly, flashed his whitened breast against the sun. As the clattering kingfisher flew unsteadily across, and seemed to push his heavy head along with ever-renewing effort, a visionary mate flitted from downward tree to tree

below. Some tall alders shaded us from the sun, in whose yellow afternoon light the drowsy forest was steeped, giving out that wholesome resinous perfume, almost the only warm odor which it is refreshing to breathe. The tame hay-cocks in the midst of the wildness gave one a pleasant reminiscence of home, like hearing one's native tongue in a strange country.

Presently our hunters came back, bringing with them a tall, thin, active-looking man, with black eyes, that glanced unconsciously on all sides, like one of those spots of sunlight which a child dances up and down the street with a bit of looking-glass. This was M., the captain of the hay-makers, a famous river-driver, and who was to have fifty men under him next winter. I could now understand that sleepless vigilance of eye. He had consented to take two of our party in his birch to seek for moose. A quick, nervous, decided man, he got them into the birch, and was off instantly, without a superfluous word. He evidently looked upon them as he would upon a couple of logs which he was to deliver at a certain place. Indeed, I doubt if life and the world presented themselves to Napier himself in a more logarithmic way. His only thought was to do the immediate duty well, and to pilot his particular raft down the crooked stream of life to the ocean beyond. The birch seemed to feel him as an inspiring soul, and slid away straight and swift for the outlet of the pond. As he disappeared under the over-arching alders of the brook, our two hunters could not repress a grave and

measured applause. There is never any extravagance among these woodmen; their eye, accustomed to reckoning the number of feet which a tree will *scale*, is rapid and close in its guess of the amount of stuff in a man. It was *laudari a laudato*, however, for they themselves were accounted good men in a birch. I was amused, in talking with them about him, to meet with an instance of that tendency of the human mind to assign some utterly improbable reason for gifts which seem unaccountable. After due praise, one of them said, "I guess he 's got some Injun in him," although I knew very well that the speaker had a thorough contempt for the red-man, mentally and physically. Here was mythology in a small way, — the same that under more favorable auspices hatched Helen out of an egg and gave Merlin an Incubus for his father. I was pleased with all I saw of M. He was in his narrow sphere a true ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, and the ragged edges of his old hat seemed to become coronated as I looked at him. He impressed me as a man really educated, — that is, with his aptitudes *drawn out* and ready for use. He was A. M. and LL. D. in Woods College, — Axe-master and Doctor of Logs. Are not *our* educations commonly like a pile of books laid over a plant in a pot? The compressed nature struggles through at every crevice, but can never get the cramp and stunt out of it. We spend all our youth in building a vessel for our voyage of life, and set forth with streamers flying; but the moment we come nigh the great loadstone mountain of our proper destiny, out leap

all our carefully-driven bolts and nails, and we get many a mouthful of good salt brine, and many a buffet of the rough water of experience, before we secure the bare right to live.

We now entered the outlet, a long-drawn aisle of alder, on each side of which spired tall firs, spruces, and white cedars. The motion of the birch reminded me of the gondola, and they represent among water-craft the *felidæ*, the cat tribe, stealthy, silent, treacherous, and preying by night. I closed my eyes, and strove to fancy myself in the dumb city, whose only horses are the bronze ones of St. Mark and that of Colleoni. But Nature would allow no rival, and bent down an alder-bough to brush my cheek and recall me. Only the robin sings in the emerald chambers of these tall sylvan palaces, and the squirrel leaps from hanging balcony to balcony.

The rain which the loons foreboded had raised the west branch of the Penobscot so much, that a strong current was setting back into the pond; and, when at last we brushed through into the river, it was full to the brim, — too full for moose, the hunters said. Rivers with low banks have always the compensation of giving a sense of entire fulness. The sun sank behind its horizon of pines, whose pointed summits notched the rosy west in an endless black *sierra*. At the same moment the golden moon swung slowly up in the east, like the other scale of that Homeric balance in which Zeus weighed the deeds of men. Sunset and moonrise at once! Adam had no more in Eden — except the

head of Eve upon his shoulder. The stream was so smooth, that the floating logs we met seemed to hang in a glowing atmosphere, the shadow-half being as real as the solid. And gradually the mind was etherized to a like dreamy placidity, till fact and fancy, the substance and the image, floating on the current of reverie, became but as the upper and under halves of one unreal reality.

In the west still lingered a pale-green light. I do not know whether it be from lifelong familiarity, but it always seems to me that the pinnacles of pine-trees make an edge to the landscape which tells better against the twilight, or the fainter dawn before the rising moon, than the rounded and cloud-cumulus outline of hard-wood trees.

After paddling a couple of miles, we found the arbored mouth of the little Malahoodus River, famous for moose. We had been on the lookout for it, and I was amused to hear one of the hunters say to the other, to assure himself of his familiarity with the spot, "You *drove* the West Branch last spring, did n't you?" as one of us might ask about a horse. We did not explore the Malahoodus far, but left the other birch to thread its cedared solitudes, while we turned back to try our fortunes in the larger stream. We paddled on about four miles farther, lingering now and then opposite the black mouth of a moose-path. The incidents of our voyage were few, but quite as exciting and profitable as the *items* of the newspapers. A stray log compensated very well for the ordinary run of accidents, and the floating *carkiss* of a moose which

we met could pass muster instead of a singular discovery of human remains by workmen in digging a cellar. Once or twice we saw what seemed ghosts of trees; but they turned out to be dead cedars, in winding-sheets of long gray moss, made spectral by the moonlight. Just as we were turning to drift back down-stream, we heard a loud gnawing sound close by us on the bank. One of our guides thought it a hedgehog, the other a bear. I inclined to the bear, as making the adventure more imposing. A rifle was fired at the sound, which began again with the most provoking indifference, ere the echo, flaring madly at first from shore to shore, died far away in a hoarse sigh.

Half past Eleven, P. M. — No sign of a moose yet. The birch, it seems, was strained at the Carry, or the pitch was softened as she lay on the shore during dinner, and she leaks a little. If there be any virtue in the *sitzbad*, I shall discover it. If I cannot extract green cucumbers from the moon's rays, I get something quite as cool. One of the guides shivers so as to shake the birch.

Quarter to Twelve. — Later from the Freshet! — The water in the birch is about three inches deep, but the dampness reaches already nearly to the waist. I am obliged to remove the matches from the ground-floor of my trousers into the upper story of a breast-pocket. Meanwhile, we are to sit immovable, — for fear of frightening the moose, — which induces cramps.

Half past Twelve. — A crashing is heard on the left bank. This is a moose in good earnest. We

are besought to hold our breaths, if possible. My fingers so numb, I could not, if I tried. *Crash! crash!* again, and then a plunge, followed by dead stillness. "Swimmin' crik," whispers guide, suppressing all unnecessary parts of speech, — "don't stir." I, for one, am not likely to. A cold fog which has been gathering for the last hour has finished me. I fancy myself one of those naked pigs that seem rushing out of market-doors in winter, frozen in a ghastly attitude of gallop. If I were to be shot myself, I should feel no interest in it. As it is, I am only a spectator, having declined a gun. *Splash!* again; this time the moose is in sight, and *click! click!* one rifle misses fire after the other. The fog has quietly spiked our batteries. The moose goes crashing up the bank, and presently we can hear it chawing its cud close by. So we lie in wait, freezing.

At one o'clock, I propose to land at a deserted *wongen* I had noticed on the way up, where I will make a fire, and leave them to refrigerate as much longer as they please. Axe in hand, I go plunging through waist-deep weeds dripping with dew, haunted by an intense conviction that the gnawing sound we had heard *was* a bear, and a bear at least eighteen hands high. There is something pokerish about a deserted dwelling, even in broad daylight; but here in the obscure wood, and the moon filtering unwillingly through the trees! Well, I made the door at last, and found the place packed fuller with darkness than it ever had been with hay. Gradually I was able to make things out a little,

and began to hack frozenly at a log which I groped out. I was relieved presently by one of the guides. He cut at once into one of the uprights of the building till he got some dry splinters, and we soon had a fire like the burning of a whole wood-wharf in our part of the country. My companion went back to the birch, and left me to keep house. First I knocked a hole in the roof (which the fire began to lick in a relishing way) for a chimney, and then cleared away a damp growth of "pison-elder," to make a sleeping place. When the unsuccessful hunters returned, I had everything quite comfortable, and was steaming at the rate of about ten horse-power a minute. Young Telemachus [1] was sorry to give up the moose so soon, and, with the teeth chattering almost out of his head, he declared that he would like to stick it out all night. However, he reconciled himself to the fire, and, making our beds of some "splits" which we poked from the roof, we lay down at half past two. I, who have inherited a habit of looking into every closet before I go to bed, for fear of fire, had become in two days such a stoic of the woods, that I went to sleep tranquilly, certain that my bedroom would be in a blaze before morning. And so, indeed, it was; and the withes that bound it together being burned off, one of the sides fell in without waking me.

Tuesday, 16*th*. — After a sleep of two hours and a half, so sound that it was as good as eight, we started at half past four for the hay-makers' camp

[1] This was my nephew, Charles Russell Lowell, who fell at the head of his brigade in the battle of Cedar Creek.

again. We found them just getting breakfast. We sat down upon the *deacon-seat* before the fire blazing between the bedroom and the *salle à manger*, which were simply two roofs of spruce-bark, sloping to the ground on one side, the other three being left open. We found that we had, at least, been luckier than the other party, for M. had brought back his convoy without even seeing a moose. As there was not room at the table for all of us to breakfast together, these hospitable woodmen forced us to sit down first, although we resisted stoutly. Our breakfast consisted of fresh bread, fried salt pork, stewed whortleberries, and tea. Our kind hosts refused to take money for it, nor would M. accept anything for his trouble. This seemed even more open-handed when I remembered that they had brought all their stores over the Carry upon their shoulders, paying an ache *extra* for every pound. If their hospitality lacked anything of hard external polish, it had all the deeper grace which springs only from sincere manliness. I have rarely sat at a *table d'hôte* which might not have taken a lesson from them in essential courtesy. I have never seen a finer race of men. They have all the virtues of the sailor, without that unsteady roll in the gait with which the ocean proclaims itself quite as much in the moral as in the physical habit of a man. They appeared to me to have hewn out a short northwest passage through wintry woods to those spice-lands of character which we dwellers in cities must reach, if at all, by weary voyages in the monotonous track of the trades.

By the way, as we were embirching last evening for our moose-chase, I asked what I was to do with my baggage. "Leave it here," said our guide, and he laid the bags upon a platform of alders, which he bent down to keep them beyond reach of the rising water.

"Will they be safe here?"

"As safe as they would be locked up in your house at home."

And so I found them at my return; only the hay-makers had carried them to their camp for greater security against the chances of the weather.

We got back to Kineo in time for dinner; and in the afternoon, the weather being fine, went up the mountain. As we landed at the foot, our guide pointed to the remains of a red shirt and a pair of blanket trousers. "That," said he, "is the reason there 's such a trade in ready-made clo'es. A suit gits pooty well wore out by the time a camp breaks up in the spring, and the lumberers want to look about right when they come back into the settlements, so they buy somethin' ready-made, and heave ole bust-up into the bush." True enough, thought I, this is the Ready-made Age. It is quicker being covered than fitted. So we all go to the slop-shop and come out uniformed, every mother's son with habits of thinking and doing cut on one pattern, with no special reference to his peculiar build.

Kineo rises 1750 feet above the sea, and 750 above the lake. The climb is very easy, with fine outlooks at every turn over lake and forest. Near

the top is a spring of water, which even Uncle Zeb might have allowed to be wholesome. The little tin dipper was scratched all over with names, showing that vanity, at least, is not put out of breath by the ascent. O Ozymandias, King of kings! We are all scrawling on something of the kind. "My name is engraved on the institutions of my country," thinks the statesman. But, alas! institutions are as changeable as tin-dippers; men are content to drink the same old water, if the shape of the cup only be new, and our friend gets two lines in the Biographical Dictionaries. After all, these inscriptions, which make us smile up here, are about as valuable as the Assyrian ones which Hincks and Rawlinson read at cross-purposes. Have we not Smiths and Browns enough, that we must ransack the ruins of Nimroud for more? Near the spring we met a Bloomer! It was the first chronic one I had ever seen. It struck me as a sensible costume for the occasion, and it will be the only wear in the Greek Kalends, when women believe that sense is an equivalent for grace.

The forest primeval is best seen from the top of a mountain. It then impresses one by its extent, like an Oriental epic. To be in it is nothing, for then an acre is as good as a thousand square miles. You cannot see five rods in any direction, and the ferns, mosses, and tree-trunks just around you are the best of it. As for solitude, night will make a better one with ten feet square of pitch dark; and mere size is hardly an element of grandeur, except in works of man, — as the Colosseum. It is

through one or the other pole of vanity that men feel the sublime in mountains. It is either, How small great I am beside it! or, Big as you are, little I's soul will hold a dozen of you. The true idea of a forest is not a *selva selvaggia*, but something humanized a little, as we imagine the forest of Arden, with trees standing at royal intervals, — a commonwealth, and not a communism. To some moods, it is congenial to look over endless leagues of unbroken savagery without a hint of man.

Wednesday. — This morning fished. Telemachus caught a *laker* of thirteen pounds and a half, and I an overgrown cusk, which we threw away, but which I found afterwards Agassiz would have been glad of, for all is fish that comes to his net, from the fossil down. The fish, when caught, are straightway knocked on the head. A lad who went with us seeming to show an over-zeal in this operation, we remonstrated. But he gave a good, human reason for it, — "He no need to ha' gone and been a fish if he did n't like it," — an excuse which superior strength or cunning has always found sufficient. It was some comfort, in this case, to think that St. Jerome believed in a limitation of God's providence, and that it did not extend to inanimate things or creatures devoid of reason.

Thus, my dear Storg, I have finished my Oriental adventures, and somewhat, it must be owned, in the diffuse Oriental manner. There is very little about Moosehead Lake in it, and not even the Latin name for moose, which I might have obtained by sufficient research. If I had killed one, I would

have given you his name in that dead language. I did not profess to give you an account of the lake; but a journal, and, moreover, *my* journal, with a little nature, a little human nature, and a great deal of I in it, which last ingredient I take to be the true spirit of this species of writing; all the rest being so much water for tender throats which cannot take it neat.

MY GARDEN ACQUAINTANCE

MY GARDEN ACQUAINTANCE

1869

One of the most delightful books in my father's library was White's "Natural History of Selborne." For me it has rather gained in charm with years. I used to read it without knowing the secret of the pleasure I found in it, but as I grow older I begin to detect some of the simple expedients of this natural magic. Open the book where you will, it takes you out of doors. In our broiling July weather one can walk out with this genially garrulous Fellow of Oriel and find refreshment instead of fatigue. You have no trouble in keeping abreast of him as he ambles along on his hobby-horse, now pointing to a pretty view, now stopping to watch the motions of a bird or an insect, or to bag a specimen for the Honourable Daines Barrington or Mr. Pennant. In simplicity of taste and natural refinement he reminds one of Walton; in tenderness toward what he would have called the brute creation, of Cowper. I do not know whether his descriptions of scenery are good or not, but they have made me familiar with his neighborhood. Since I first read him, I have walked over some of his favorite haunts, but I still see them through his eyes rather than by any recollection of actual and

personal vision. The book has also the delightfulness of absolute leisure. Mr. White seems never to have had any harder work to do than to study the habits of his feathered fellow-townsfolk, or to watch the ripening of his peaches on the wall. No doubt he looked after the souls of his parishioners with official and even friendly interest, but, I cannot help suspecting, with a less personal solicitude. For he seems to have lived before the Fall. His volumes are the journal of Adam in Paradise,

> "Annihilating all that 's made
> To a green thought in a green shade."

It is positive rest only to look into that garden of his. It is vastly better than to

> "See great Diocletian walk
> In the Salonian garden's noble shade,"

for thither ambassadors intrude to bring with them the noises of Rome, while here the world has no entrance. No rumor of the revolt of the American Colonies appears to have reached him. "The natural term of an hog's life" has more interest for him than that of an empire. Burgoyne may surrender and welcome; of what consequence is *that* compared with the fact that we can explain the odd tumbling of rooks in the air by their turning over "to scratch themselves with one claw"? All the couriers in Europe spurring rowel-deep make no stir in Mr. White's little Chartreuse; but the arrival of the house-martin a day earlier or later than last year is a piece of news worth sending express to all his correspondents.

Another secret charm of this book is its inad-

vertent humor, so much the more delicious because unsuspected by the author. How pleasant is his innocent vanity in adding to the list of the British, and still more of the Selbornian, *fauna!* I believe he would gladly have consented to be eaten by a tiger or a crocodile, if by that means the occasional presence within the parish limits of either of these anthropophagous brutes could have been established. He brags of no fine society, but is plainly a little elated by "having considerable acquaintance with a tame brown owl." Most of us have known our share of owls, but few can boast of intimacy with a feathered one. The great events of Mr. White's life, too, have that disproportionate importance which is always humorous. To think of his hands having actually been thought worthy (as neither Willoughby's nor Ray's were) to hold a stilted plover, the *Charadrius himantopus*, with no back toe, and therefore "liable, in speculation, to perpetual vacillations"! I wonder, by the way, if metaphysicians have no hind toes. In 1770 he makes the acquaintance in Sussex of "an old family tortoise," which had then been domesticated for thirty years. It is clear that he fell in love with it at first sight. We have no means of tracing the growth of his passion; but in 1780 we find him eloping with its object in a post-chaise. "The rattle and hurry of the journey so perfectly roused it that, when I turned it out in a border, it walked twice down to the bottom of my garden." It reads like a Court Journal: "Yesterday morning H. R. H. the Princess Alice took an airing of half an hour

on the terrace of Windsor Castle." This tortoise might have been a member of the Royal Society, if he could have condescended to so ignoble an ambition. It had but just been discovered that a surface inclined at a certain angle with the plane of the horizon took more of the sun's rays. The tortoise had always known this (though he unostentatiously made no parade of it), and used accordingly to tilt himself up against the garden-wall in the autumn. He seems to have been more of a philosopher than even Mr. White himself, caring for nothing but to get under a cabbage-leaf when it rained, or when the sun was too hot, and to bury himself alive before frost, — a four-footed Diogenes, who carried his tub on his back.

There are moods in which this kind of history is infinitely refreshing. These creatures whom we affect to look down upon as the drudges of instinct are members of a commonwealth whose constitution rests on immovable bases. Never any need of reconstruction there! *They* never dream of settling it by vote that eight hours are equal to ten, or that one creature is as clever as another and no more. *They* do not use their poor wits in regulating God's clocks, nor think they cannot go astray so long as they carry their guide-board about with them, — a delusion we often practise upon ourselves with our high and mighty reason, that admirable finger-post which points every way, as we choose to turn it, and always right. It is good for us now and then to converse with a world like Mr. White's, where Man is the least important of animals. But one

who, like me, has always lived in the country and always on the same spot, is drawn to his book by other occult sympathies. Do we not share his indignation at that stupid Martin who had graduated his thermometer no lower than 4° above zero of Fahrenheit, so that in the coldest weather ever known the mercury basely absconded into the bulb, and left us to see the victory slip through our fingers just as they were closing upon it? No man, I suspect, ever lived long in the country without being bitten by these meteorological ambitions. He likes to be hotter and colder, to have been more deeply snowed up, to have more trees, and larger, blown down than his neighbors. With us descendants of the Puritans especially, these weather-competitions supply the abnegated excitement of the race-course. Men learn to value thermometers of the true imaginative temperament, capable of prodigious elations and corresponding dejections. The other day (5th July) I marked 98° in the shade, my high-water mark, higher by one degree than I had ever seen it before. I happened to meet a neighbor; as we mopped our brows at each other, he told me that he had just cleared 100°, and I went home a beaten man. I had not felt the heat before, save as a beautiful exaggeration of sunshine; but now it oppressed me with the prosaic vulgarity of an oven. What had been poetic intensity became all at once rhetorical hyperbole. I might suspect his thermometer (as indeed I did, for we Harvard men are apt to think ill of any graduation save our own); but it was a poor con-

solation. The fact remained that his herald Mercury, standing a-tiptoe, could look down on mine. I seem to glimpse something of this familiar weakness in Mr. White. He, too, has shared in these mercurial triumphs and defeats. Nor do I doubt that he had a true country-gentleman's interest in the weathercock ; that his first question on coming down of a morning was, like Barabas's,

"Into what quarter peers my halcyon's bill ?"

It is an innocent and healthful employment of the mind, distracting one from too continual study of oneself, and leading one to dwell rather upon the indigestions of the elements than one's own. "Did the wind back round, or go about with the sun?" is a rational question that bears not remotely on the making of hay and the prosperity of crops. I have little doubt that the regulated observation of the vane in many different places, and the interchange of results by telegraph, would put the weather, as it were, in our power, by betraying its ambushes before it is ready to give the assault.[1] At first sight, nothing seems more drolly trivial than the lives of those whose single achievement is to record the wind and the temperature three times a day. Yet such men are doubtless sent into the world for this special end, and perhaps there is no kind of accurate observation, whatever its object, that has not its final use and value for some one or other. It is even to be hoped that the speculations of our newspaper editors and their myriad correspon-

[1] This was written before we had a Weather Bureau.

dents upon the signs of the political atmosphere may also fill their appointed place in a well-regulated universe, if it be only that of supplying so many more jack-o'-lanterns to the future historian. Nay, the observations on finance of an M. C. whose sole knowledge of the subject has been derived from a lifelong success in getting a living out of the public without paying any equivalent therefor, will perhaps be of interest hereafter to some explorer of our *cloaca maxima*, whenever it is cleansed.

For many years I have been in the habit of noting down some of the leading events of my embowered solitude, such as the coming of certain birds and the like, — a kind of *mémoires pour servir*, after the fashion of White, rather than properly digested natural history. I think it not impossible that a few simple stories of my winged acquaintances might be found entertaining by persons of kindred taste.

There is a common notion that animals are better meteorologists than men, and I have little doubt that in immediate weather-wisdom they have the advantage of our sophisticated senses (though I suspect a sailor or shepherd would be their match), but I have seen nothing that leads me to believe their minds capable of erecting the horoscope of a whole season, and letting us know beforehand whether the winter will be severe or the summer rainless. Their foresight is provincial or even parochial,

> "By nature knew he ech ascensioun
> Of equinoxial in thilke toun."

I more than suspect that the Clerk of the Weather himself does not always know very long in advance whether he is to draw an order for hot or cold, dry or moist, and the musquash is scarce likely to be wiser. I have noted but two days' difference in the coming of the song-sparrow between a very early and a very backward spring. This very year I saw the linnets at work thatching, just before a snow-storm which covered the ground several inches deep for a number of days. They struck work and left us for a while, no doubt in search of food. Birds frequently perish from sudden changes in our whimsical spring weather of which they had no foreboding. More than thirty years ago, a cherry-tree, then in full bloom, near my window, was covered with humming-birds benumbed by a fall of mingled rain and snow, which probably killed many of them. It should seem that their coming was dated by the height of the sun, which betrays them into unthrifty matrimony;

> "So nature pricketh hem in their corages";

but their going is another matter. The chimney-swallows leave us early, for example, apparently so soon as their latest fledglings are firm enough of wing to attempt the long rowing-match that is before them. On the other hand, the wild-geese probably do not leave the North till they are frozen out, for I have heard their bugles sounding southward so late as the middle of December. What may be called local migrations are doubtless dictated by the chances of food. I have once been visited by large flights of cross-bills; and whenever the

snow lies long and deep on the ground, a flock of cedar-birds comes in midwinter to eat the berries on my hawthorns. I have never been quite able to fathom the local, or rather geographical partialities of birds. Never before this summer (1870) have the king-birds, handsomest of flycatchers, built in my orchard; though I always know where to find them within half a mile. The rose-breasted grosbeak has been a familiar bird in Brookline (three miles away), yet I never saw one here till last July, when I found a female busy among my raspberries and surprisingly bold. I hope she was *prospecting* with a view to settlement in our garden. She seemed, on the whole, to think well of my fruit, and I would gladly plant another bed if it would help to win over so delightful a neighbor.

The return of the robin is commonly announced by the newspapers, like that of eminent or notorious people to a watering-place, as the first authentic notification of spring. And such his appearance in the orchard and garden undoubtedly is. But, in spite of his name of migratory thrush, he stays with us all winter, and I have seen him when the thermometer marked 15 degrees below zero of Fahrenheit, armed impregnably within, like Emerson's Titmouse, and as cheerful as he. The robin has a bad reputation among people who do not value themselves less for being fond of cherries. There is, I admit, a spice of vulgarity in him, and his song is rather of the Bloomfield sort, too largely ballasted with prose. His ethics are of the Poor

Richard school, and the main chance which calls forth all his energy is altogether of the belly. He never has those fine intervals of lunacy into which his cousins, the catbird and the mavis, are apt to fall. But for a' that and twice as muckle 's a' that, I would not exchange him for all the cherries that ever came out of Asia Minor. With whatever faults, he has not wholly forfeited that superiority which belongs to the children of nature. He has a finer taste in fruit than could be distilled from many successive committees of the Horticultural Society, and he eats with a relishing gulp not inferior to Dr. Johnson's. He feels and freely exercises his right of eminent domain. His is the earliest mess of green peas ; his all the mulberries I had fancied mine. But if he get also the lion's share of the raspberries, he is a great planter, and sows those wild ones in the woods, that solace the pedestrian and give a momentary calm even to the jaded victims of the White Hills. He keeps a strict eye over one's fruit, and knows to a shade of purple when your grapes have cooked long enough in the sun. During the severe drought a few years ago, the robins wholly vanished from my garden. I neither saw nor heard one for three weeks. Meanwhile a small foreign grape-vine, rather shy of bearing, seemed to find the dusty air congenial, and, dreaming perhaps of its sweet Argos across the sea, decked itself with a score or so of fair bunches. I watched them from day to day till they should have secreted sugar enough from the sunbeams, and at last made up my mind that

I would celebrate my vintage the next morning. But the robins too had somehow kept note of them. They must have sent out spies, as did the Jews into the promised land, before I was stirring. When I went with my basket, at least a dozen of these winged vintagers bustled out from among the leaves, and alighting on the nearest trees interchanged some shrill remarks about me of a derogatory nature. They had fairly sacked the vine. Not Wellington's veterans made cleaner work of a Spanish town; not Federals or Confederates were ever more impartial in the confiscation of neutral chickens. I was keeping my grapes a secret to surprise the fair Fidele with, but the robins made them a profounder secret to her than I had meant. The tattered remnant of a single bunch was all my harvest-home. How paltry it looked at the bottom of my basket, — as if a humming-bird had laid her egg in an eagle's nest! I could not help laughing; and the robins seemed to join heartily in the merriment. There was a native grape-vine close by, blue with its less refined abundance, but my cunning thieves preferred the foreign flavor. Could I tax them with want of taste?

The robins are not good solo singers, but their chorus, as, like primitive fire-worshippers, they hail the return of light and warmth to the world, is unrivalled. There are a hundred singing like one. They are noisy enough then, and sing, as poets should, with no afterthought. But when they come after cherries to the tree near my window, they muffle their voices, and their faint *pip, pip, pop!*

sounds far away at the bottom of the garden, where they know I shall not suspect them of robbing the great black-walnut of its bitter-rinded store.[1] They are feathered Pecksniffs, to be sure, but then how brightly their breasts, that look rather shabby in the sunlight, shine in a rainy day against the dark green of the fringe-tree! After they have pinched and shaken all the life out of an earthworm, as Italian cooks pound all the spirit out of a steak, and then gulped him, they stand up in honest self-confidence, expand their red waistcoats with the virtuous air of a lobby member, and outface you with an eye that calmly challenges inquiry. "Do *I* look like a bird that knows the flavor of raw vermin? I throw myself upon a jury of my peers. Ask any robin if he ever ate anything less ascetic than the frugal berry of the juniper, and he will answer that his vow forbids him." Can such an open bosom cover such depravity? Alas, yes! I have no doubt his breast was redder at that very moment with the blood of my raspberries. On the whole, he is a doubtful friend in the garden. He makes his dessert of all kinds of berries, and is not averse from early pears. But when we remember how omnivorous he is, eating his own weight in an incredibly short time, and that Nature seems exhaustless in her invention of new insects hostile to vegetation, perhaps we may reckon that he does more good than harm. For my own part,

[1] The screech-owl, whose cry, despite his ill name, is one of the sweetest sounds in nature, softens his voice in the same way with the most beguiling mockery of distance.

I would rather have his cheerfulness and kind neighborhood than many berries.

For his cousin, the catbird, I have a still warmer regard. Always a good singer, he sometimes nearly equals the brown thrush, and has the merit of keeping up his music later in the evening than any bird of my familiar acquaintance. Ever since I can remember, a pair of them have built in a gigantic syringa, near our front door, and I have known the male to sing almost uninterruptedly during the evenings of early summer till twilight duskened into dark. They differ greatly in vocal talent, but all have a delightful way of crooning over, and, as it were, rehearsing their song in an undertone, which makes their nearness always unobtrusive. Though there is the most trustworthy witness to the imitative propensity of this bird, I have only once, during an intimacy of more than forty years, heard him indulge it. In that case, the imitation was by no means so close as to deceive, but a free reproduction of the notes of some other birds, especially of the oriole, as a kind of variation in his own song. The catbird is as shy as the robin is vulgarly familiar. Only when his nest or his fledglings are approached does he become noisy and almost aggressive. I have known him to station his young in a thick cornel-bush on the edge of the raspberry-bed, after the fruit began to ripen, and feed them there for a week or more. In such cases he shows none of that conscious guilt which makes the robin contemptible. On the contrary, he will maintain his post in the

thicket, and sharply scold the intruder who ventures to steal *his* berries. After all, his claim is only for tithes, while the robin will bag your entire crop if he get a chance.

Dr. Watts's statement that "birds in their little nests agree," like too many others intended to form the infant mind, is very far from being true. On the contrary, the most peaceful relation of the different species to each other is that of armed neutrality. They are very jealous of neighbors. A few years ago, I was much interested in the house-building of a pair of summer yellow-birds. They had chosen a very pretty site near the top of a tall white lilac, within easy eye-shot of a chamber window. A very pleasant thing it was to see their little home growing with mutual help, to watch their industrious skill interrupted only by little flirts and snatches of endearment, frugally cut short by the common-sense of the tiny housewife. They had brought their work nearly to an end, and had already begun to line it with fern-down, the gathering of which demanded more distant journeys and longer absences. But, alas! the syringa, immemorial manor of the catbirds, was not more than twenty feet away, and these "giddy neighbors" had, as it appeared, been all along jealously watchful, though silent, witnesses of what they deemed an intrusion of squatters. No sooner were the pretty mates fairly gone for a new load of lining, than

> "To their unguarded nest these weasel Scots
> Came stealing."

Silently they flew back and forth, each giving a

vengeful dab at the nest in passing. They did not fall-to and deliberately destroy it, for they might have been caught at their mischief. As it was, whenever the yellow-birds came back, their enemies were hidden in their own sight-proof bush. Several times their unconscious victims repaired damages, but at length, after counsel taken together, they gave it up. Perhaps, like other unlettered folk, they came to the conclusion that the Devil was in it, and yielded to the invisible persecutions of witchcraft.

The robins, by constant attacks and annoyances, have succeeded in driving off the blue-jays who used to build in our pines, their gay colors and quaint noisy ways making them welcome and amusing neighbors. I once had the chance of doing a kindness to a household of them, which they received with very friendly condescension. I had had my eye for some time upon a nest, and was puzzled by a constant fluttering of what seemed full-grown wings in it whenever I drew nigh. At last I climbed the tree, in spite of angry protests from the old birds against my intrusion. The mystery had a very simple solution. In building the nest, a long piece of packthread had been somewhat loosely woven in. Three of the young had contrived to entangle themselves in it, and had become full-grown without being able to launch themselves upon the air. One was unharmed; another had so tightly twisted the cord about its shank that one foot was curled up and seemed paralyzed; the third, in its struggles to

escape, had sawn through the flesh of the thigh and so much harmed itself that I thought it humane to put an end to its misery. When I took out my knife to cut their hempen bonds, the heads of the family seemed to divine my friendly intent. Suddenly ceasing their cries and threats, they perched quietly within reach of my hand, and watched me in my work of manumission. This, owing to the fluttering terror of the prisoners, was an affair of some delicacy; but erelong I was rewarded by seeing one of them fly away to a neighboring tree, while the cripple, making a parachute of his wings, came lightly to the ground, and hopped off as well as he could with one leg, obsequiously waited on by his elders. A week later I had the satisfaction of meeting him in the pine-walk, in good spirits, and already so far recovered as to be able to balance himself with the lame foot. I have no doubt that in his old age he accounted for his lameness by some handsome story of a wound received at the famous Battle of the Pines, when our tribe, overcome by numbers, was driven from its ancient camping-ground. Of late years the jays have visited us only at intervals; and in winter their bright plumage, set off by the snow, and their cheerful cry, are especially welcome. They would have furnished Æsop with a fable, for the feathered crest in which they seem to take so much satisfaction is often their fatal snare. Country boys make a hole with their finger in the snow-crust just large enough to admit the jay's head, and, hollowing it out somewhat beneath, bait it

with a few kernels of corn. The crest slips easily into the trap, but refuses to be pulled out again, and he who came to feast remains a prey.

Twice have the crow-blackbirds attempted a settlement in my pines, and twice have the robins, who claim a right of preëmption, so successfully played the part of border-ruffians as to drive them away, — to my great regret, for they are the best substitute we have for rooks. At Shady Hill (now, alas! empty of its so long-loved household) they build by hundreds, and nothing can be more cheery than their creaking clatter (like a convention of old-fashioned tavern-signs) as they gather at evening to debate in mass meeting their windy politics, or to gossip at their tent-doors over the events of the day. Their port is grave, and their stalk across the turf as martial as that of a second-rate ghost in Hamlet. They never meddled with my corn, so far as I could discover.

For a few years I had crows, but their nests are an irresistible bait for boys, and their settlement was broken up. They grew so wonted as to throw off a great part of their shyness, and to tolerate my near approach. One very hot day I stood for some time within twenty feet of a mother and three children, who sat on an elm bough over my head, gasping in the sultry air, and holding their wings half-spread for coolness. All birds during the pairing season become more or less sentimental, and murmur soft nothings in a tone very unlike the grinding-organ repetition and loudness of their habitual song. The crow is very comical as a

lover, and to hear him trying to soften his croak to the proper Saint Preux standard, has something the effect of a Mississippi boatman quoting Tennyson. Yet there are few things to my ear more melodious than his caw of a clear winter morning as it drops to you filtered through five hundred fathoms of crisp blue air. The hostility of all smaller birds makes the moral character of the crow, for all his deaconlike demeanor and garb, somewhat questionable. He could never sally forth without insult. The golden robins, especially, would chase him as far as I could follow with my eye, making him duck clumsily to avoid their importunate bills. I do not believe, however, that he robbed any nests hereabouts, for the refuse of the gas-works, which, in our free-and-easy community, is allowed to poison the river, supplied him with dead alewives in abundance. I used to watch him making his periodical visits to the salt-marshes and coming back with a fish in his beak to his young savages, who, no doubt, like it in that condition which makes it savory to the Kanakas and other corvine races of men.

Orioles are in great plenty with me. I have seen seven males flashing about the garden at once. A merry crew of them swing their hammocks from the pendulous boughs. During one of these latter years, when the canker-worms stripped our elms as bare as winter, these birds went to the trouble of rebuilding their unroofed nests, and chose for the purpose trees which are safe from those swarming vandals, such as the ash and the button-wood.

One year a pair (disturbed, I suppose, elsewhere) built a second nest in an elm, within a few yards of the house. My friend, Edward E. Hale, told me once that the oriole rejected from his web all strands of brilliant color, and I thought it a striking example of that instinct of concealment noticeable in many birds, though it should seem in this instance that the nest was amply protected by its position from all marauders but owls and squirrels. Last year, however, I had the fullest proof that Mr. Hale was mistaken. A pair of orioles built on the lowest trailer of a weeping elm, which hung within ten feet of our drawing-room window, and so low that I could reach it from the ground. The nest was wholly woven and felted with ravellings of woollen carpet in which scarlet predominated. Would the same thing have happened in the woods? Or did the nearness of a human dwelling perhaps give the birds a greater feeling of security? They are very bold, by the way, in quest of cordage, and I have often watched them stripping the fibrous bark from a honeysuckle growing over the very door. But, indeed, all my birds look upon me as if I were a mere tenant at will, and they were landlords. With shame I confess it, I have been bullied even by a hummingbird. This spring, as I was cleansing a pear-tree of its lichens, one of these little zigzagging blurs came purring toward me, couching his long bill like a lance, his throat sparkling with angry fire, to warn me off from a Missouri-currant whose honey he was sipping. And many a time he has

driven me out of a flower-bed. This summer, by the way, a pair of these winged emeralds fastened their mossy acorn-cup upon a bough of the same elm which the orioles had enlivened the year before. We watched all their proceedings from the window through an opera-glass, and saw their two nestlings grow from black needles with a tuft of down at the lower end, till they whirled away on their first short experimental flights. They became strong of wing in a surprisingly short time, and I never saw them or the male bird after, though the female was regular as usual in her visits to our petunias and verbenas. I do not think it ground enough for a generalization, but in the many times when I watched the old birds feeding their young, the mother always alighted, while the father as uniformly remained upon the wing.

The bobolinks are generally chance visitors, tinkling through the garden in blossoming-time, but this year, owing to the long rains early in the season, their favorite meadows were flooded, and they were driven to the upland. So I had a pair of them domiciled in my grass-field. The male used to perch in an apple-tree, then in full bloom, and, while I stood perfectly still close by, he would circle away, quivering round the entire field of five acres, with no break in his song, and settle down again among the blossoms, to be hurried away almost immediately by a new rapture of music. He had the volubility of an Italian charlatan at a fair, and, like him, appeared to be proclaiming the mer-

its of some quack remedy. *Opodeldoc-opodeldoc-try-Doctor-Lincoln's-opodeldoc!* he seemed to repeat over and over again, with a rapidity that would have distanced the deftest-tongued Figaro that ever rattled. I remember Count Gurowski saying once, with that easy superiority of knowledge about this country which is the monopoly of foreigners, that we had no singing-birds! Well, well, Mr. Hepworth Dixon has found the typical America in Oneida and Salt Lake City. Of course, an intelligent European is the best judge of these matters. The truth is there are more singing-birds in Europe because there are fewer forests. These songsters love the neighborhood of man because hawks and owls are rarer, while their own food is more abundant. Most people seem to think, the more trees, the more birds. Even Châteaubriand, who first tried the primitive-forest-cure, and whose description of the wilderness in its imaginative effects is unmatched, fancies the "people of the air singing their hymns to him." So far as my own observation goes, the farther one penetrates the sombre solitudes of the woods, the more seldom does one hear the voice of any singing-bird. In spite of Châteaubriand's minuteness of detail, in spite of that marvellous reverberation of the decrepit tree falling of its own weight, which he was the first to notice, I cannot help doubting whether he made his way very deep into the wilderness. At any rate, in a letter to Fontanes, written in 1804, he speaks of *mes chevaux paissants à quelque distance.* To be sure Châteaubri-

and was apt to mount the high horse, and this may have been but an afterthought of the *grand seigneur*, but certainly one would not make much headway on horseback toward the druid fastnesses of the primeval pine.

The bobolinks build in considerable numbers in a meadow within a quarter of a mile of us. A houseless lane passes through the midst of their camp, and in clear westerly weather, at the right season, one may hear a score of them singing at once. When they are breeding, if I chance to pass, one of the male birds always accompanies me like a constable, flitting from post to post of the rail-fence, with a short note of reproof continually repeated, till I am fairly out of the neighborhood. Then he will swing away into the air and run down the wind, gurgling music without stint over the unheeding tussocks of meadow-grass and dark clumps of bulrushes that mark his domain.

We have no bird whose song will match the nightingale's in compass, none whose note is so rich as that of the European blackbird; but for mere rapture I have never heard the bobolink's rival. Yet his opera-season is a short one. The ground and tree sparrows are our most constant performers. It is now late in August, and one of the latter sings every day and all day long in the garden. Till within a fortnight, a pair of indigo-birds would keep up their lively *duo* for an hour together. While I write, I hear an oriole gay as in June, and the plaintive *may-be* of the goldfinch tells me he is stealing my lettuce-seeds. I know

not what the experience of others may have been, but the only bird I have ever heard sing in the night has been the chip-bird. I should say he sang about as often during the darkness as cocks crow. One can hardly help fancying that he sings in his dreams.

> "Father of light, what sunnie seed,
> What glance of day hast thou confined
> Into this bird? To all the breed
> This busie ray thou hast assigned;
> Their magnetism works all night
> And dreams of Paradise and light."

On second thought, I remember to have heard the cuckoo strike the hours nearly all night with the regularity of a Swiss clock.

The dead limbs of our elms, which I spare to that end, bring us the flicker every summer, and almost daily I hear his wild scream and laugh close at hand, himself invisible. He is a shy bird, but a few days ago I had the satisfaction of studying him through the blinds as he sat on a tree within a few feet of me. Seen so near and at rest, he makes good his claim to the title of pigeon-woodpecker. Lumberers have a notion that he is harmful to timber, digging little holes through the bark to encourage the settlement of insects. The regular rings of such perforations which one may see in almost any apple-orchard seem to give some probability to this theory. Almost every season a solitary quail visits us, and, unseen among the currant-bushes, calls *Bob White*, *Bob White*, as if he were playing at hide-and-seek with that imaginary being. A rarer visitant is the turtle-dove,

whose pleasant coo (something like the muffled crow of a cock from a coop covered with snow) I have sometimes heard, and whom I once had the good luck to see close by me in the mulberry-tree. The wild-pigeon, once numerous, I have not seen for many years.[1] Of savage birds, a hen-hawk now and then quarters himself upon us for a few days, sitting sluggish in a tree after a surfeit of poultry. One of them once offered me a near shot from my study-window one drizzly day for several hours. But it was Sunday, and I gave him the benefit of its gracious truce of God.

Certain birds have disappeared from our neighborhood within my memory. I remember when the whippoorwill could be heard in Sweet Auburn. The night-hawk, once common, is now rare. The brown thrush has moved farther up country. For years I have not seen or heard any of the larger owls, whose hooting was one of my boyish terrors. The cliff-swallow, strange emigrant, that eastward takes his way, has come and gone again in my time. The bank-swallows, wellnigh innumerable during my boyhood, no longer frequent the crumbly cliff of the gravel-pit by the river. The barn-swallows, which once swarmed in our barn, flashing through the dusty sunstreaks of the mow, have been gone these many years. My father would lead me out to see them gather on the roof, and take counsel before their yearly migration, as Mr. White used to see them at Selborne. *Eheu, fugaces!* Thank fortune, the swift still glues his nest, and

[1] They made their appearance again this summer (1870).

rolls his distant thunders night and day in the wide-throated chimneys, still sprinkles the evening air with his merry twittering. The populous heronry in Fresh Pond meadows has been wellnigh broken up, but still a pair or two haunt the old home, as the gypsies of Ellangowan their ruined huts, and every evening fly over us riverwards, clearing their throats with a hoarse hawk as they go, and, in cloudy weather, scarce higher than the tops of the chimneys. Sometimes I have known one to alight in one of our trees, though for what purpose I never could divine. Since this was written, they began in greater numbers to spend the day in a group of pines just within my borders. Once, when my exploring footstep startled them, I counted fifty flashing in circles over my head. By watchful protection I induced two pairs of them to build, and, as if sensible of my friendship, they made their nests in a pine within a hundred feet of the house. They shine for ever in Longfellow's verse. Kingfishers have sometimes puzzled me in the same way, perched at high noon in a pine, springing their watchman's rattle when they flitted away from my curiosity, and seeming to shove their top-heavy heads along as a man does a wheelbarrow.

Some birds have left us, I suppose, because the country is growing less wild. I once found a summer duck's nest within quarter of a mile of our house, but such a *trouvaille* would be impossible now as Kidd's treasure. And yet the mere taming of the neighborhood does not quite satisfy me as an

explanation. Twenty years ago, on my way to bathe in the river, I saw every day a brace of woodcock, on the miry edge of a spring within a few rods of a house, and constantly visited by thirsty cows. There was no growth of any kind to conceal them, and yet these ordinarily shy birds were almost as indifferent to my passing as common poultry would have been. Since bird-nesting has become scientific, and dignified itself as oölogy, that, no doubt, is partly to blame for some of our losses. But some old friends are constant. Wilson's thrush comes every year to remind me of that most poetic of ornithologists. He flits before me through the pine-walk like the very genius of solitude. A pair of pewees have built immemorially on a jutting brick in the arched entrance to the ice-house. Always on the same brick, and never more than a single pair, though two broods of five each are raised there every summer. How do they settle their claim to the homestead? By what right of primogeniture? Once the children of a man employed about the place *oölogized* the nest, and the pewees left us for a year or two. I felt towards those boys as the messmates of the Ancient Mariner did towards him after he had shot the albatross. But the pewees came back at last, and one of them is now on his wonted perch, so near my window that I can hear the click of his bill as he snaps a fly on the wing with the unerring precision a stately Trasteverina shows in the capture of her smaller deer. The pewee is the first bird to pipe up in the morning; and, during the early summer he preludes his

matutinal ejaculation of *pewee* with a slender whistle, unheard at any other time. He saddens with the season, and, as summer declines, he changes his note to *eheu, pewee!* as if in lamentation. Had he been an Italian bird, Ovid would have had a plaintive tale to tell about him. He is so familiar as often to pursue a fly through the open window into my library.

There is something inexpressibly dear to me in these old friendships of a lifetime. There is scarce a tree of mine but has had, at some time or other, a happy homestead among its boughs, and to which I cannot say,

> "Many light hearts and wings,
> Which now be dead, lodged in thy living bowers."

My walk under the pines would lose half its summer charm were I to miss that shy anchorite, the Wilson's thrush, nor hear in haying-time the metallic ring of his song, that justifies his rustic name of *scythe-whet*. I protect my game as jealously as an English squire. If anybody had oölogized a certain cuckoo's nest I know of (I have a pair in my garden every year), it would have left me a sore place in my mind for weeks. I love to bring these aborigines back to the mansuetude they showed to the early voyagers, and before (forgive the involuntary pun) they had grown accustomed to man and knew his savage ways. And they repay your kindness with a sweet familiarity too delicate ever to breed contempt. I have made a Penn-treaty with them, preferring that to the Puritan way with the natives, which converted them to a

little Hebraism and a great deal of Medford rum. If they will not come near enough to me (as most of them will), I bring them close with an opera-glass, — a much better weapon than a gun. I would not, if I could, convert them from their pretty pagan ways. The only one I sometimes have savage doubts about is the red squirrel. I *think* he oölogizes. I *know* he eats cherries (we counted five of them at one time in a single tree, the stones pattering down like the sparse hail that preludes a storm), and that he gnaws off the small end of pears to get at the seeds. He steals the corn from under the noses of my poultry. But what would you have? He will come down upon a limb of the tree I am lying under till he is within a yard of me. He and his mate will scurry up and down the great black-walnut for my diversion, chattering like monkeys. Can I sign his death-warrant who has tolerated me about his grounds so long? Not I. Let them steal, and welcome. I am sure I should, had I had the same bringing up and the same temptation. As for the birds, I do not believe there is one of them but does more good than harm; and of how many featherless bipeds can this be said?

A GOOD WORD FOR WINTER

A GOOD WORD FOR WINTER

1870

"MEN scarcely know how beautiful fire is," says Shelley; and I am apt to think there are a good many other things concerning which their knowledge might be largely increased without becoming burdensome. Nor are they altogether reluctant to be taught, — not so reluctant, perhaps, as unable, — and education is sure to find one fulcrum ready to her hand by which to get a purchase on them. For most of us, I have noticed, are not without an amiable willingness to assist at any spectacle or entertainment (loosely so called) for which no fee is charged at the door. If special tickets are sent us, another element of pleasure is added in a sense of privilege and preëminence (pitiably scarce in a democracy) so deeply rooted in human nature that I have seen people take a strange satisfaction in being near of kin to the mute chief personage in a funeral. It gave them a moment's advantage over the rest of us whose grief was rated at a lower place in the procession. But the words "admission free" at the bottom of a handbill, though holding out no bait of inequality, have yet a singular charm for many minds, especially in the country. There is something touching in the constancy

with which men attend free lectures, and in the honest patience with which they listen to them. He who pays may yawn or shift testily in his seat, or even go out with an awful reverberation of criticism, for he has bought the right to do any or all of these and paid for it. But gratuitous hearers are anæsthetized to suffering by a sense of virtue. They are performing perhaps the noblest, as it is one of the most difficult, of human functions in getting Something (no matter how small) for Nothing. They are not pestered by the awful duty of securing their money's worth. They are wasting time, to do which elegantly and without lassitude is the highest achievement of civilization. If they are cheated, it is, at worst, only of a superfluous hour which was rotting on their hands. Not only is mere amusement made more piquant, but instruction more palatable, by this universally relished sauce of gratuity. And if the philosophic observer finds an object of agreeable contemplation in the audience, as they listen to a discourse on the probability of making missionaries go down better with the Feejee-Islanders by balancing the hymn-book in one pocket with a bottle of Worcestershire in the other, or to a plea for arming the female gorilla with the ballot, he also takes a friendly interest in the lecturer, and admires the wise economy of Nature who thus contrives an ample field of honest labor for her bores. Even when the insidious hat is passed round after one of these eleemosynary feasts, the relish is but heightened by a conscientious refusal to disturb the satisfaction's

completeness with the rattle of a single contributory penny. So firmly persuaded am I of this *gratis*-instinct in our common humanity, that I believe I could fill a house by advertising a free lecture on Tupper considered as a philosophic poet, or on my personal recollections of the late James K. Polk. This being so, I have sometimes wondered that the peep-shows which Nature provides with such endless variety for her children, and to which we are admitted on the bare condition of having eyes, should be so generally neglected. To be sure, eyes are not so common as people think, or poets would be plentier, and perhaps also these exhibitions of hers are cheapened in estimation by the fact that in enjoying them we are not getting the better of anybody else. Your true lovers of nature, however, contrive to get even *this* solace; and Wordsworth, looking upon mountains as his own peculiar sweethearts, was jealous of anybody else who ventured upon even the most innocent flirtation with them. As if *such* fellows, indeed, could pretend to that nicer sense of what-d'ye-call-it which was so remarkable in him! Marry come up! Mountains, no doubt, may inspire a profounder and more exclusive passion, but on the whole I am not sorry to have been born and bred among more domestic scenes, where I can be hospitable without a pang. I am going to ask you presently to take potluck with me at a board where Winter shall supply whatever there is of cheer.

I think the old fellow has hitherto had scant justice done him in the main. We make him the

symbol of old age or death, and think we have settled the matter. As if old age were never kindly as well as frosty; as if it had no reverend graces of its own as good in their way as the noisy impertinence of childhood, the elbowing self-conceit of youth, or the pompous mediocrity of middle life! As if there were anything discreditable in death, or nobody had ever longed for it! Suppose we grant that Winter is the sleep of the year, what then? I take it upon me to say that his dreams are finer than the best reality of his waking rivals.

"Sleep, Silence' child, the father of soft Rest,"

is a very agreeable acquaintance, and most of us are better employed in his company than anywhere else. For my own part, I think Winter a pretty wide-awake old boy, and his bluff sincerity and hearty ways are more congenial to my mood, and more wholesome for me, than any charms of which his rivals are capable. Spring is a fickle mistress, who either does not know her own mind, or is so long in making it up, whether you shall have her or not have her, that one gets tired at last of her pretty miffs and reconciliations. You go to her to be cheered up a bit, and ten to one catch her in the sulks, expecting you to find enough good-humor for both. After she has become Mrs. Summer she grows a little more staid in her demeanor; and her abundant table, where you are sure to get the earliest fruits and vegetables of the season, is a good foundation for steady friendship; but she has lost that delicious aroma of maiden-

hood, and what was delicately rounded grace in the girl gives more than hints of something like redundance in the matron. Autumn is the poet of the family. He gets you up a splendor that you would say was made out of real sunset; but it is nothing more than a few hectic leaves, when all is done. He is but a sentimentalist, after all; a kind of Lamartine whining along the ancestral avenues he has made bare timber of, and begging a contribution of good-spirits from your own savings to keep him in countenance. But Winter has his delicate sensibilities too, only he does not make them as good as indelicate by thrusting them forever in your face. He is a better poet than Autumn, when he has a mind, but, like a truly great one as he is, he brings you down to your bare manhood, and bids you understand him out of that, with no adventitious helps of association, or he will none of you. He does not touch those melancholy chords on which Autumn is as great a master as Heine. Well, is there no such thing as thrumming on them and maundering over them till they get out of tune, and you wish some manly hand would crash through them and leave them dangling brokenly forever? Take Winter as you find him, and he turns out to be a thoroughly honest fellow, with no nonsense in him, and tolerating none in you, which is a great comfort in the long run. He is not what they call a genial critic; but bring a real man along with you, and you will find there is a crabbed generosity about the old cynic that you would not exchange for all the creamy concessions

of Autumn. "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness," quotha? That's just it; Winter soon blows your head clear of fog and makes you see things as they are; I thank him for it! The truth is, between ourselves, I have a very good opinion of the whole family, who always welcome me without making me feel as if I were too much of a poor relation. There ought to be some kind of distance, never so little, you know, to give the true relish. They are as good company, the worst of them, as any I know, and I am not a little flattered by a condescension from any one of them; but I happen to hold Winter's retainer, this time, and, like an honest advocate, am bound to make as good a showing as I can for him, even if it cost a few slurs upon the rest of the household. Moreover, Winter is coming, and one would like to get on the blind side of him.

The love of Nature in and for herself, or as a mirror for the moods of the mind, is a modern thing. The fleeing to her as an escape from man was brought into fashion by Rousseau; for his prototype Petrarch, though he had a taste for pretty scenery, had a true antique horror for the grander aspects of nature. He got once to the top of Mont Ventoux, but it is very plain that he did not enjoy it. Indeed, it is only within a century or so that the search after the picturesque has been a safe employment. It is not so even now in Greece or Southern Italy. Where the Anglo-Saxon carves his cold fowl, and leaves the relics of his picnic, the ancient or mediæval man might

be pretty confident that some ruffian would try the edge of his knife on a chicken of the Platonic sort, and leave more precious bones as an offering to the genius of the place. The ancients were certainly more social than we, though that, perhaps, was natural enough, when a good part of the world was still covered with forest. They huddled together in cities as well for safety as to keep their minds warm. The Romans had a fondness for country life, but they had fine roads, and Rome was always within easy reach. The author of the Book of Job is the earliest I know of who showed any profound sense of the moral meaning of the outward world; and I think none has approached him since, though Wordsworth comes nearest with the first two books of the "Prelude." But their feeling is not precisely of the kind I speak of as modern, and which gave rise to what is called descriptive poetry. Chaucer opens his Clerk's Tale with a bit of landscape admirable for its large style, and as well composed as any Claude.

> "There is right at the west end of Itaille,
> Down at the root of Vesulus the cold,
> A lusty plain abundant of vitaille,
> Where many a tower and town thou mayst behold,
> That founded were in time of fathers old,
> And many an other délectable sight;
> And Sálucës this noble country hight."

What an airy precision of touch there is here, and what a sure eye for the points of character in landscape! But the picture is altogether subsidiary. No doubt the works of Salvator Rosa and Gaspar Poussin show that there must have

been some amateur taste for the grand and terrible in scenery; but the British poet Thomson ("sweet-souled" is Wordsworth's apt word) was the first to do with words what they had done partially with colors. He was turgid, no good metrist, and his English is like a translation from one of those poets who wrote in Latin after it was dead; but he was a man of sincere genius, and not only English, but European literature is largely in his debt. He was the inventor of cheap amusement for the million, to be had of All-out-doors for the asking. It was his impulse which unconsciously gave direction to Rousseau, and it is to the school of Jean Jacques that we owe St. Pierre, Cowper, Châteaubriand, Wordsworth, Byron, Lamartine, George Sand, Ruskin, — the great painters of ideal landscape.

So long as men had slender means, whether of keeping out cold or checkmating it with artificial heat, Winter was an unwelcome guest, especially in the country. There he was the bearer of a *lettre de cachet*, which shut its victims in solitary confinement with few resources but to boose round the fire and repeat ghost-stories, which had lost all their freshness and none of their terror. To go to bed was to lie awake of cold, with an added shudder of fright whenever a loose casement or a waving curtain chose to give you the goose-flesh. Bussy Rabutin, in one of his letters, gives us a notion how uncomfortable it was in the country, with green wood, smoky chimneys, and doors and windows that thought it was their duty to make the wind whistle,

not to keep it out. With fuel so dear, it could not have been much better in the city, to judge by Ménage's warning against the danger of our dressing-gowns taking fire, while we cuddle too closely over the sparing blaze. The poet of Winter himself is said to have written in bed, with his hand through a hole in the blanket; and we may suspect that it was the warmth quite as much as the company that first drew men together at the coffee-house. Coleridge, in January, 1800, writes to Wedgewood: "I am sitting by a fire in a rug great-coat. . . . It is most barbarously cold, and you, I fear, can shield yourself from it only by perpetual imprisonment." This thermometrical view of winter is, I grant, a depressing one; for I think there is nothing so demoralizing as cold. I know of a boy who, when his father, a bitter economist, was brought home dead, said only, "Now we can burn as much wood as we like." I would not off-hand prophesy the gallows for that boy. I remember with a shudder a pinch I got from the cold once in a railroad-car. A born fanatic of fresh air, I found myself glad to see the windows hermetically sealed by the freezing vapor of our breath, and plotted the assassination of the conductor every time he opened the door. I felt myself sensibly barbarizing, and would have shared Colonel Jack's bed in the ash-hole of the glass-furnace with a grateful heart. Since then I have had more charity for the prevailing ill-opinion of winter. It was natural enough that Ovid should measure the years of his exile in Pontus by the number of winters.

Ut sumus in Ponto, ter frigore constitit Ister,
Facta est Euxini dura ter unda maris:

Thrice hath the cold bound Ister fast, since I
In Pontus was, thrice Euxine's wave made hard.

Jubinal has printed an Anglo-Norman piece of doggerel in which Winter and Summer dispute which is the better man. It is not without a kind of rough and inchoate humor, and I like it because old Whitebeard gets tolerably fair play. The jolly old fellow boasts of his rate of living, with that contempt of poverty which is the weak spot in the burly English nature.

Jà Dieu ne place que me avyenge
Que ne face plus honour
Et plus despenz en un soul jour
Que vus en tote vostre vie:

Now God forbid it hap to me
That I make not more great display,
And spend more in a single day
Than you can do in all your life.

The best touch, perhaps, is Winter's claim for credit as a mender of the highways, which was not without point when every road in Europe was a quagmire during a good part of the year unless it was bottomed on some remains of Roman engineering.

Je su, fet-il, seignur et mestre
Et à bon droit le dey estre,
Quant de la bowe face caucé
Par un petit de geelé:

Master and lord I am, says he,
And of good right so ought to be,
Since I make causeys, safely crost,
Of mud, with just a pinch of frost.

But there is no recognition of Winter as the best of out-door company.[1]

Even Emerson, an open-air man, and a bringer of it, if ever any, confesses,

> "The frost-king ties my fumbling feet,
> Sings in my ear, my hands are stones,
> Curdles the blood to the marble bones,
> Tugs at the heartstrings, numbs the sense,
> And hems in life with narrowing fence."

Winter was literally "the inverted year," as Thomson called him; for such entertainments as could be had must be got within doors. What cheerfulness there was in brumal verse was that of Horace's *dissolve frigus ligna super foco large reponens*, so pleasantly associated with the cleverest scene in Roderick Random. This is the tone of that poem of Walton's friend Cotton, which won the praise of Wordsworth: —

> "Let us home,
> Our mortal enemy is come;
> Winter and all his blustering train
> Have made a voyage o'er the main.
> . . . . . .
> "Fly, fly, the foe advances fast;
> Into our fortress let us haste,
> Where all the roarers of the north
> Can neither storm nor starve us forth.
>
> "There underground a magazine
> Of sovereign juice is cellared in,

[1] Mais vous Yver, trop estes plain
De nège, vent, pluye, e grézil;
Ou vous deust bannir en exil;
Sans point flater, je parle plain,
Yver, vous n'estes qu'un vilain.
Ch. d'Orléans, Chans. xciv.

Liquor that will the siege maintain
Should Phœbus ne'er return again.

. . . . . .

"Whilst we together jovial sit
Careless, and crowned with mirth and wit,
Where, though bleak winds confine us home,
Our fancies round the world shall roam."

Thomson's view of Winter is also, on the whole, a hostile one, though he does justice to his grandeur.

"Thus Winter falls,
A heavy gloom oppressive o'er the world,
Through Nature shedding influence malign."

He finds his consolations, like Cotton, in the house, though more refined: —

"While without
The ceaseless winds blow ice, be my retreat
Between the groaning forest and the shore
Beat by the boundless multitude of waves,
A rural, sheltered, solitary scene,
Where ruddy fire and beaming tapers join
To cheer the gloom. There studious let me sit
And hold high converse with the mighty dead."

Doctor Akenside, a man to be spoken of with respect, follows Thomson. With him, too, "Winter desolates the year," and

"How pleasing wears the wintry night
Spent with the old illustrious dead!
While by the taper's trembling light
I seem those awful scenes to tread
Where chiefs or legislators lie," &c.

Akenside had evidently been reading Thomson. He had the conceptions of a great poet with less faculty than many a little one, and is one of those versifiers of whom it is enough to say that we are always willing to break him off in the middle (as I

have ventured to do) with an &c., well knowing that what follows is but the coming-round again of what went before, marching in a circle with the cheap numerosity of a stage-army. In truth, it is no wonder that the short days of that cloudy northern climate should have added to winter a gloom borrowed of the mind. We hardly know, till we have experienced the contrast, how sensibly our winter is alleviated by the longer daylight and the pellucid atmosphere. I once spent a winter in Dresden, a southern climate compared with England, and really almost lost my respect for the sun when I saw him groping among the chimney-pots opposite my windows as he described his impoverished arc in the sky. The enforced seclusion of the season makes it the time for serious study and occupations that demand fixed incomes of unbroken time. This is why Milton said "that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal," though in his twentieth year he had written, on the return of spring, —

> Fallor ? an et nobis redeunt in carmina vires
> Ingeniumque mihi munere veris adest ?
>
> Err I ? or do the powers of song return
> To me, and genius too, the gifts of Spring ?

Goethe, so far as I remember, was the first to notice the cheerfulness of snow in sunshine. His *Harz-reise im Winter* gives no hint of it, for that is a diluted reminiscence of Greek tragic choruses and the Book of Job in nearly equal parts. In one of the singularly interesting and characteristic letters to Frau von Stein, however, written during

the journey, he says: "It is beautiful indeed; the mist heaps itself together in light snow-clouds, the sun looks through, and the snow over everything gives back a feeling of gayety." But I find in Cowper the first recognition of a general amiability in Winter. The gentleness of his temper, and the wide charity of his sympathies, made it natural for him to find good in everything except the human heart. A dreadful creed distilled from the darkest moments of dyspeptic solitaries compelled him against his will to see in *that* the one evil thing made by a God whose goodness is over all his works. Cowper's two walks in the morning and noon of a winter's day are delightful, so long as he contrives to let himself be happy in the graciousness of the landscape. Your muscles grow springy, and your lungs dilate with the crisp air as you walk along with him. You laugh with him at the grotesque shadow of your legs lengthened across the snow by the just-risen sun. I know nothing that gives a purer feeling of out-door exhilaration than the easy verses of this escaped hypochondriac. But Cowper also preferred his sheltered garden-walk to those robuster joys, and bitterly acknowledged the depressing influence of the darkened year. In December, 1780, he writes: "At this season of the year, and in this gloomy uncomfortable climate, it is no easy matter for the owner of a mind like mine to divert it from sad subjects, and to fix it upon such as may administer to its amusement." Or was it because he was writing to the dreadful Newton? Perhaps his poetry bears truer

witness to his habitual feeling, for it is only there that poets disenthral themselves of their reserve and become fully possessed of their greatest charm, — the power of being franker than other men. In the Third Book of the Task he boldly affirms his preference of the country to the city even in winter: —

> "But are not wholesome airs, though unperfumed
> By roses, and clear suns, though scarcely felt,
> And groves, if inharmonious, yet secure
> From clamor, and whose very silence charms,
> To be preferred to smoke? . . .
> They would be, were not madness in the head
> And folly in the heart; were England now
> What England was, plain, hospitable, kind,
> And undebauched."

The conclusion shows, however, that he was thinking mainly of fireside delights, not of the blusterous companionship of nature. This appears even more clearly in the Fourth Book: —

> "O Winter, ruler of the inverted year";

but I cannot help interrupting him to say how pleasant it always is to track poets through the gardens of their predecessors and find out their likings by a flower snapped off here and there to garnish their own nosegays. Cowper had been reading Thomson, and "the inverted year" pleased his fancy with its suggestion of that starry wheel of the zodiac moving round through its spaces infinite. He could not help loving a handy Latinism (especially with elision beauty added), any more than Gray, any more than Wordsworth, — on the sly. But the member for Olney has the floor: —

"O Winter, ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way,
I love thee all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west, but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering at short notice, in one group,
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed Retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know."

I call this a good *human* bit of writing, imaginative, too, — not so flushed, not so . . . highfaluting (let me dare the odious word!) as the modern style since poets have got hold of a theory that imagination is common-sense turned inside out, and not common-sense sublimed, — but wholesome, masculine, and strong in the simplicity of a mind wholly occupied with its theme. To me Cowper is still the best of our descriptive poets for every-day wear. And what unobtrusive skill he has! How he heightens, for example, your sense of winter-evening seclusion, by the twanging horn of the postman on the bridge! That horn has rung in my ears ever

since I first heard it, during the consulate of the second Adams. Wordsworth strikes a deeper note; but does it not sometimes come over one (just the least in the world) that one would give anything for a bit of nature pure and simple, without quite so strong a flavor of W. W.? W. W. is, of course, sublime and all that — but! For my part, I will make a clean breast of it, and confess that I can't look at a mountain without fancying the late laureate's gigantic Roman nose thrust between me and it, and thinking of Dean Swift's profane version of *Romanos rerum dominos* into *Roman nose! a rare un! dom your nose!* But do I judge verses, then, by the impression made on me by the man who wrote them? Not so fast, my good friend, but, for good or evil, the character and its intellectual product are inextricably interfused.

If I remember aright, Wordsworth himself (except in his magnificent skating-scene in the "Prelude") has not much to say for winter out of doors. I cannot recall any picture by him of a snow-storm. The reason may possibly be that in the Lake Country even the winter storms bring rain rather than snow. He was thankful for the Christmas visits of Crabb Robinson, because they "helped him through the winter." His only hearty praise of winter is when, as Général Février, he defeats the French: —

> "Humanity, delighting to behold
> A fond reflection of her own decay,
> Hath painted Winter like a traveller old,
> Propped on a staff, and, through the sullen day,
> In hooded mantle, limping o'er the plain

As though his weakness were disturbed by pain:
Or, if a juster fancy should allow
An undisputed symbol of command,
The chosen sceptre is a withered bough
Infirmly grasped within a withered hand.
These emblems suit the helpless and forlorn;
But mighty Winter the device shall scorn."

The Scottish poet Grahame, in his "Sabbath," says manfully: —

"Now is the time
To visit Nature in her grand attire";

and he has one little picture which no other poet has surpassed: —

"High-ridged the whirlëd drift has almost reached
The powdered keystone of the churchyard porch:
Mute hangs the hooded bell; the tombs lie buried."

Even in our own climate, where the sun shows his winter face as long and as brightly as in central Italy, the seduction of the chimney-corner is apt to predominate in the mind over the severer satisfactions of muffled fields and penitential woods. The very title of Whittier's delightful "Snow-Bound" shows what *he* was thinking of, though he does vapor a little about digging out paths. The verses of Emerson, perfect as a Greek fragment (despite the archaism of a dissyllabic fire), which he has chosen for his epigraph, tell us, too, how the

"Housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm."

They are all in a tale. It is always the *tristis Hiems* of Virgil. Catch one of them having a kind word for old Barbe Fleurie, unless he whines

through some cranny, like a beggar, to heighten their enjoyment while they toast their slippered toes. I grant there is a keen relish of contrast about the bickering flame as it gives an emphasis beyond Gherardo della Notte to loved faces, or kindles the gloomy gold of volumes scarce less friendly, especially when a tempest is blundering round the house. Wordsworth has a fine touch that brings home to us the comfortable contrast of without and within, during a storm at night, and the passage is highly characteristic of a poet whose inspiration always has an undertone of *bourgeois:*

> "How touching, when, at midnight, sweep
> Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,
> To hear, — and sink again to sleep!"

J. H., one of those choice poets who will not tarnish their bright fancies by publication, always insists on a snow-storm as essential to the true atmosphere of whist. Mrs. Battles, in her famous rule for the game, implies winter, and would doubtless have added tempest, if it could be had for the asking. For a good solid read also, into the small hours, there is nothing like that sense of safety against having your evening laid waste, which Euroclydon brings, as he bellows down the chimney, making your fire gasp, or rustles snow-flakes against the pane with a sound more soothing than silence. Emerson, as he is apt to do, not only hit the nail on the head, but drove it home, in that last phrase of the "tumultuous privacy."

But I would exchange this, and give something to boot, for the privilege of walking out into the

vast blur of a north-northeast snow-storm, and getting a strong draught on the furnace within, by drawing the first furrows through its sandy drifts. I love those

> "Moonlit twilights white with snow makes
> With tempest of the blinding flakes."

If the wind veer too much toward the east, you get the heavy snow that gives a true Alpine slope to the boughs of your evergreens, and traces a skeleton of your elms in white; but you must have plenty of north in your gale if you want those driving needles of frost that sting the cheeks to a crimson madder than that of fire. During the great storm of two winters ago, the most robustious periwig-pated fellow of late years, I waded and floundered a couple of miles through the whispering night, and brought home that feeling of expansion we have after being in good company. "Great things doeth He which we cannot comprehend; for he saith to the snow, 'Be thou on the earth.'"

There is excellent snow scenery in Judd's "Margaret," but some one has confiscated my copy of that admirable book, and, perhaps, Homer's picture of a snow-storm is the best yet in its large simplicity: —

> "And as in winter-time, when Jove his cold sharp javelins throws
> Amongst us mortals, and is moved to whirl the earth with snows,
> The winds asleep, he freely pours till highest promontories,
> Hill-tops, low meadows, and the fields that crown with most contents
> The toils of men, seaports and shores, are hid, and every place.
> But floods, that fair snow's tender flakes, as their own brood, embrace."

Chapman, after all, though he makes very free with him, comes nearer Homer than anybody else. There is nothing in the original of that fair snow's tender flakes, but neither Pope nor Cowper could get out of their heads the Psalmist's tender phrase, "He giveth his snow like wool," for which also Homer affords no hint. Pope talks of "dissolving fleeces," and Cowper of a "fleecy mantle." But David is nobly simple, while Pope is simply nonsensical, and Cowper pretty. If they must have prettiness, Martial would have supplied them with it in his

Densum tacitarum vellus aquarum,

which is too pretty, though I fear it would have pleased Dr. Donne. Eustathius of Thessalonica calls snow ὕδωρ ἐρίωδες, woolly water, which a poor old French poet, Godeau, has amplified into this:

Lorsque la froidure inhumaine
De leur verd ornement depouille les forêts
Sous une neige épaisse il couvre les guérets,
Et la neige a pour eux la chaleur de la laine.

In this, as in Pope's version of the passage in Homer, there is, at least, a sort of suggestion of snow-storm in the blinding drift of words. But, on the whole, if one would know what snow is, I should advise him not to hunt up what the poets have said about it, but to look at the sweet miracle itself.

The preludings of Winter are as beautiful as those of Spring. In a gray December day, when, as the farmers say, it is too cold to snow, his numbed fingers will let fall doubtfully a few star-shaped flakes, the snow-drops and anemones that

harbinger his more assured reign. Now, and now only, may be seen, heaped on the horizon's eastern edge, those "blue clouds" from forth which Shakespeare says that Mars "doth pluck the masoned turrets." Sometimes also, when the sun is low, you will see a single cloud trailing a flurry of snow along the southern hills in a wavering fringe of purple. And when at last the real snow-storm comes, it leaves the earth with a virginal look on it that no other of the seasons can rival, — compared with which, indeed, they seem soiled and vulgar.

And what is there in nature so beautiful as the next morning after such confusion of the elements? Night has no silence like this of busy day. All the batteries of noise are spiked. We see the movement of life as a deaf man sees it, a mere wraith of the clamorous existence that inflicts itself on our ears when the ground is bare. The earth is clothed in innocence as a garment. Every wound of the landscape is healed; whatever was stiff has been sweetly rounded as the breasts of Aphrodite; what was unsightly has been covered gently with a soft splendor, as if, Cowley would have said, Nature had cleverly let fall her handkerchief to hide it. If the Virgin (*Notre Dame de la Neige*) were to come back, here is an earth that would not bruise her foot nor stain it. It is

> "The fanned snow
> That 's bolted by the northern blasts twice o'er," —
> (Soffiata e stretta dai venti Schiavi,)
> Winnowed and packed by the Sclavonian winds, —

packed so hard sometimes on hill-slopes that it will

bear your weight. What grace is in all the curves, as if every one of them had been swept by that inspired thumb of Phidias's journeyman!

Poets have fancied the footprints of the wind in those light ripples that sometimes scurry across smooth water with a sudden blur. But on this gleaming hush the aerial deluge has left plain marks of its course; and in gullies through which it rushed torrent-like, the eye finds its bed irregularly scooped like that of a brook in hard beach-sand, or, in more sheltered spots, traced with outlines like those left by the sliding edges of the surf upon the shore. The air, after all, is only an infinitely thinner kind of water, such as I suppose we shall have to drink when the state does her whole duty as a moral reformer. Nor is the wind the only thing whose trail you will notice on this sensitive surface. You will find that you have more neighbors and night visitors than you dreamed of. Here is the dainty footprint of a cat; here a dog has looked in on you like an amateur watchman to see if all is right, slumping clumsily about in the mealy treachery. And look! before you were up in the morning, though you were a punctual courtier at the sun's levee, here has been a squirrel zigzagging to and fro like a hound gathering the scent, and some tiny bird searching for unimaginable food, — perhaps for the tinier creature, whatever it is, that drew this slender continuous trail like those made on the wet beach by light borderers of the sea. The earliest autographs were as frail as these. Poseidon traced his lines, or giant birds made their

mark, on preadamite sea-margins; and the thunder-gust left the tear-stains of its sudden passion there; nay, we have the signatures of delicatest fern-leaves on the soft ooze of æons that dozed away their dreamless leisure before consciousness came upon the earth with man. Some whim of nature locked them fast in stone for us afterthoughts of creation. Which of us shall leave a footprint as imperishable as that of the ornithorhynchus, or much more so than that of these Bedouins of the snow-desert? Perhaps it was only because the ripple and the rain-drop and the bird were not thinking of themselves, that they had such luck. The chances of immortality depend very much on that. How often have we not seen poor mortals, dupes of a season's notoriety, carving their names on seeming-solid rock of merest beach-sand, whose feeble hold on memory shall be washed away by the next wave of fickle opinion! Well, well, honest Jacques, there are better things to be found in the snow than sermons.

The snow that falls damp comes commonly in larger flakes from windless skies, and is the prettiest of all to watch from under cover. This is the kind Homer had in mind; and Dante, who had never read him, compares the *dilatate falde*, the flaring flakes, of his fiery rain, to those of snow among the mountains without wind. This sort of snowfall has no fight in it, and does not challenge you to a wrestle like that which drives well from the northward, with all moisture thoroughly winnowed out of it by the frosty wind. Burns, who

was more out of doors than most poets, and whose barefoot Muse got the color in her cheeks by vigorous exercise in all weathers, was thinking of this drier deluge, when he speaks of the "whirling drift," and tells how

"Chanticleer
Shook off the powthery snaw."

But the damper and more deliberate falls have a choice knack at draping the trees; and about eaves or stone-walls, wherever, indeed, the evaporation is rapid, and it finds a chance to cling, it will build itself out in curves of wonderful beauty. I have seen one of these dumb waves, thus caught in the act of breaking, curl four feet beyond the edge of my roof and hang there for days, as if Nature were too well pleased with her work to let it crumble from its exquisite pause. After such a storm, if you are lucky enough to have even a sluggish ditch for a neighbor, be sure to pay it a visit. You will find its banks corniced with what seems precipitated light, and the dark current down below gleams as if with an inward lustre. Dull of motion as it is, you never saw water that seemed alive before. It has a brightness, like that of the eyes of some smaller animals, which gives assurance of life, but of a life foreign and unintelligible.

A damp snow-storm often turns to rain, and, in our freakish climate, the wind will whisk sometimes into the northwest so suddenly as to plate all the trees with crystal before it has swept the sky clear of its last cobweb of cloud. Ambrose Philips, in a poetical epistle from Copenhagen to the Earl

of Dorset, describes this strange confectionery of Nature, — for such, I am half ashamed to say, it always seems to me, recalling the "glorified sugar-candy" of Lamb's first night at the theatre. It has an artificial air, altogether beneath the grand artist of the atmosphere, and besides does too much mischief to the trees for a philodendrist to take unmixed pleasure in it. Perhaps it deserves a poet like Philips, who really loved Nature and yet liked her to be mighty fine, as Pepys would say, with a heightening of powder and rouge : —

"And yet but lately have I seen e'en here
The winter in a lovely dress appear.
Ere yet the clouds let fall the treasured snow,
Or winds begun through hazy skies to blow,
At evening a keen eastern breeze arose,
And the descending rain unsullied froze.
Soon as the silent shades of night withdrew,
The ruddy noon disclosed at once to view
The face of Nature in a rich disguise,
And brightened every object to my eyes;
For every shrub, and every blade of grass,
And every pointed thorn, seemed wrought in glass;
In pearls and rubies rich the hawthorns show,
And through the ice the crimson berries glow;
The thick-sprung reeds, which watery marshes yield,
Seem polished lances in a hostile field;
The stag in limpid currents with surprise
Sees crystal branches on his forehead rise;
The spreading oak, the beech, the towering pine,
Glazed over in the freezing ether shine;
The frighted birds the rattling branches shun,
Which wave and glitter in the distant sun,
When, if a sudden gust of wind arise,
The brittle forest into atoms flies,
The crackling wood beneath the tempest bends
And in a spangled shower the prospect ends."

It is not uninstructive to see how tolerable Ambrose is, so long as he sticks manfully to what he really saw. The moment he undertakes to improve on Nature he sinks into the mere court poet, and we surrender him to the jealousy of Pope without a sigh. His "rattling branches," "crackling wood," and crimson berries glowing through the ice are good, as truth always is after a fashion; but what shall we say of that dreadful stag which, there is little doubt, he valued above all the rest, because it was purely his own?

The damper snow tempts the amateur architect and sculptor. His Pentelicus has been brought to his very door, and if there are boys to be had (whose company beats all other recipes for prolonging life) a middle-aged Master of the Works will knock the years off his account and make the family Bible seem a dealer in foolish fables, by a few hours given heartily to this business. First comes the Sisyphean toil of rolling the clammy balls till they refuse to budge farther. Then, if you would play the statuary, they are piled one upon the other to the proper height; or if your aim be masonry, whether of house or fort, they must be squared and beaten solid with the shovel. The material is capable of very pretty effects, and your young companions meanwhile are unconsciously learning lessons in æsthetics. From the feeling of satisfaction with which one squats on the damp floor of his extemporized dwelling, I have been led to think that the backwoodsman must get a sweeter savor of self-sufficingness from the house his own hands

have built than Bramante or Sansovino could ever give. Perhaps the fort is the best thing, for it calls out more masculine qualities and adds the cheer of battle with that dumb artillery which gives pain enough to test pluck without risk of serious hurt. Already, as I write, it is twenty-odd years ago. The balls fly thick and fast. The uncle defends the waist-high ramparts against a storm of nephews, his breast plastered with decorations like another Radetsky's. How well I recall the indomitable good-humor under fire of him who fell in the front at Ball's Bluff, the silent pertinacity of the gentle scholar who got his last hurt at Fair Oaks, the ardor in the charge of the gallant gentleman who, with the death-wound in his side, headed his brigade at Cedar Creek! How it all comes back, and they never come! I cannot again be the Vauban of fortresses in the innocent snow, but I shall never see children moulding their clumsy giants in it without longing to help. It was a pretty fancy of the young Vermont sculptor to make his first essay in this evanescent material. Was it a figure of Youth, I wonder? Would it not be well if all artists could begin in stuff as perishable, to melt away when the sun of prosperity began to shine, and leave nothing behind but the gain of practised hands? It is pleasant to fancy that Shakespeare served his apprenticeship at this trade, and owed to it that most pathetic of despairing wishes, —

> "O, that I were a mockery-king of snow,
> Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke,
> To melt myself away in water-drops!"

I have spoken of the exquisite curves of snow surfaces. Not less rare are the tints of which they are capable, — the faint blue of the hollows, for the shadows in snow are always blue, and the tender rose of higher points, as you stand with your back to the setting sun and look upward across the soft rondure of a hillside. I have seen within a mile of home effects of color as lovely as any iridescence of the Silberhorn after sundown. Charles II., who never said a foolish thing, gave the English climate the highest praise when he said that it allowed you more hours out of doors than any other, and I think our winter may fairly make the same boast as compared with the rest of the year. Its still mornings, with the thermometer near zero, put a premium on walking. There is more sentiment in turf, perhaps, and it is more elastic under the foot; its silence, too, is wellnigh as congenial with meditation as that of fallen pine-tassel; but for exhilaration there is nothing like a stiff snow-crust that creaks like a cricket at every step, and communicates its own sparkle to the senses. The air you drink is *frappé*, all its grosser particles precipitated, and the dregs of your blood with them. A purer current mounts to the brain, courses sparkling through it, and rinses it thoroughly of all dejected stuff. There is nothing left to breed an exhalation of ill-humor or despondency. They say that this rarefied atmosphere has lessened the capacity of our lungs. Be it so. Quart-pots are for muddier liquor than nectar. To me, the city in winter is infinitely dreary, — the sharp street-

corners have such a chill in them, and the snow so soon loses its maidenhood to become a mere drab, — "doing shameful things," as Steele says of politicians, "without being ashamed." I pine for the Quaker purity of my country landscape. I am speaking, of course, of those winters that are not niggardly of snow, as ours too often are, giving us a gravelly dust instead. Nothing can be unsightlier than those piebald fields where the coarse brown hide of Earth shows through the holes of her ragged ermine. But even when there is abundance of snow, I find as I grow older that there are not so many good crusts as there used to be. When I first observed this, I rashly set it to the account of that general degeneracy in nature (keeping pace with the same melancholy phenomenon in man) which forces itself upon the attention and into the philosophy of middle life. But happening once to be weighed, it occurred to me that an arch which would bear fifty pounds could hardly be blamed for giving way under more than three times the weight. I have sometimes thought that if theologians would remember this in their arguments, and consider that the man may slump through, with no fault of his own, where the boy would have skimmed the surface in safety, it would be better for all parties. However, when you *do* get a crust that will bear, and know any brooklet that runs down a hillside, be sure to go and take a look at him, especially if your crust is due, as it commonly is, to a cold snap following eagerly on a thaw. You will never find him so

cheerful. As he shrank away after the last thaw, he built for himself the most exquisite caverns of ice to run through, if not "measureless to man" like those of Alph, the sacred river, yet perhaps more pleasing for their narrowness than those for their grandeur. What a cunning silversmith is Frost! The rarest workmanship of Delhi or Genoa copies him but clumsily, as if the fingers of all other artists were thumbs. Fernwork and lacework and filigree in endless variety, and under it all the water tinkles like a distant guitar, or drums like a tambourine, or gurgles like the Tokay of an anchorite's dream. Beyond doubt there is a fairy procession marching along those frail arcades and translucent corridors.

> "Their oaten pipes blow wondrous shrill,
> The hemlocks small blow clear."

And hark! is that the ringing of Titania's bridle, or the bells of the wee, wee hawk that sits on Oberon's wrist? This wonder of Frost's handiwork may be had every winter, but he can do better than this, though I have seen it but once in my life. There had been a thaw without wind or rain, making the air fat with gray vapor. Towards sundown came that chill, the avant-courier of a northwesterly gale. Then, though there was no perceptible current in the atmosphere, the fog began to attach itself in frosty roots and filaments to the southern side of every twig and grass-stem. The very posts had poems traced upon them by this dumb minstrel. Wherever the moist seeds found lodgement grew an inch-deep moss fine as cobweb, a slender

coral-reef, argentine, delicate, as of some silent sea in the moon, such as Agassiz dredges when he dreams. The frost, too, can wield a delicate graver, and in fancy leaves Piranesi far behind. He covers your window-pane with Alpine etchings, as if in memory of that sanctuary where he finds shelter even in midsummer.

Now look down from your hillside across the valley. The trees are leafless, but this is the season to study their anatomy, and did you ever notice before how much color there is in the twigs of many of them? And the smoke from those chimneys is so blue it seems like a feeder of the sky into which it flows. Winter refines it and gives it agreeable associations. In summer it suggests cookery or the drudgery of steam-engines, but now your fancy (if it can forget for a moment the dreary usurpation of stoves) traces it down to the fireside and the brightened faces of children. Thoreau is the only poet who has fitly sung it. The wood-cutter rises before day and

> "First in the dusky dawn he sends abroad
> His early scout, his emissary, smoke,
> The earliest, latest pilgrim from his roof,
> To feel the frosty air; . . .
> And, while he crouches still beside the hearth,
> Nor musters courage to unbar the door,
> It has gone down the glen with the light wind
> And o'er the plain unfurled its venturous wreath,
> Draped the tree-tops, loitered upon the hill,
> And warmed the pinions of the early bird;
> And now, perchance, high in the crispy air,
> Has caught sight of the day o'er the earth's edge,
> And greets its master's eye at his low door
> As some refulgent cloud in the upper sky."

Here is very bad verse and very good imagination. He had been reading Wordsworth, or he would not have made *tree-tops* an iambus. In reading it over again I am bound to say that I have never seen smoke that became a refulgent cloud in the upper sky anywhere but in London. In the *Moretum* of Virgil (or, if not his, better than most of his) is a pretty picture of a peasant kindling his winter-morning fire. He rises before dawn,

> Sollicitaque manu tenebras explorat inertes
> Vestigatque focum læsus quem denique sensit.
> Parvulus exusto remanebat stipite fumus,
> Et cinis obductæ celabat lumina prunæ.
> Admovet his pronam submissa fronte lucernam,
> Et producit acu stupas humore carentes,
> Excitat et crebris languentem flatibus ignem ;
> Tandem concepto tenebræ fulgore recedunt,
> Oppositaque manu lumen defendit ab aura.

> With cautious hand he gropes the sluggish dark,
> Tracking the hearth which, scorched, he feels erelong.
> In burnt-out logs a slender smoke remained,
> And raked-up ashes hid the cinders' eyes ;
> Stooping, to these the lamp outstretched he nears,
> And, with a needle loosening the dry wick,
> With frequent breath excites the languid flame.
> Before the gathering glow the shades recede,
> And his bent hand the new-caught light defends.

Ovid heightens the picture by a single touch : —

> Ipse genu posito flammas exsuscitat aura.

> Kneeling, his breath calls back to life the flames.

If you walk down now into the woods, you may find a robin or a bluebird among the red-cedars, or a nuthatch scaling deviously the trunk of some hardwood tree with an eye as keen as that of a

French soldier foraging for the *pot-au-feu* of his mess. Perhaps a blue-jay shrills *cah cah* in his corvine trebles, or a chickadee

> "Shows feats of his gymnastic play,
> Head downward, clinging to the spray."

But both him and the snow-bird I love better to see, tiny fluffs of feathered life, as they scurry about in a driving mist of snow, than in this serene air.

Coleridge has put into verse one of the most beautiful phenomena of a winter walk: —

> "The woodman winding westward up the glen
> At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
> The viewless snow-mist weaves a glistening haze,
> Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
> An image with a halo round its head."

But this aureole is not peculiar to winter. I have noticed it often in a summer morning, when the grass was heavy with dew, and even later in the day, when the dewless grass was still fresh enough to have a gleam of its own.

For my own part I prefer a winter walk that takes in the nightfall and the intense silence that erelong follows it. The evening lamps look yellower by contrast with the snow, and give the windows that hearty look of which our secretive fires have almost robbed them. The stars seem

> "To hang, like twinkling winter lamps,
> Among the branches of the leafless trees,"

or, if you are on a hill-top (whence it is sweet to watch the home-lights gleam out one by one), they look nearer than in summer, and appear to take a conscious part in the cold. Especially in one of those

stand-stills of the air that forebode a change of weather, the sky is dusted with motes of fire of which the summer-watcher never dreamed. Winter, too, is, on the whole, the triumphant season of the moon, a moon devoid of sentiment, if you choose, but with the refreshment of a purer intellectual light, — the cooler orb of middle life. Who ever saw anything to match that gleam, rather divined than seen, which runs before her over the snow, a breath of light, as she rises on the infinite silence of winter night? High in the heavens, also she seems to bring out some intenser property of cold with her chilly polish. The poets have instinctively noted this. When Goody Blake imprecates a curse of perpetual chill upon Harry Gill, she has

> "The cold, cold moon above her head";

and Coleridge speaks of

> "The silent icicles,
> Quietly gleaming to the quiet moon."

As you walk homeward, — for it is time that we should end our ramble, — you may perchance hear the most impressive sound in nature, unless it be the fall of a tree in the forest during the hush of summer noon. It is the stifled shriek of the lake yonder as the frost throttles it. Wordsworth has described it (too much, I fear, in the style of Dr. Armstrong): —

> "And, interrupting oft that eager game,
> From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice,
> The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,
> Gave out to meadow-grounds and hills a loud

> Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
> Howling in troops along the Bothnic main."

Thoreau (unless the English lakes have a different dialect from ours) calls it admirably well a "whoop." But it is a noise like none other, as if Demogorgon were moaning inarticulately from under the earth. Let us get within doors, lest we hear it again, for there is something bodeful and uncanny in it.

NOTES

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PAGE 1

Maine was still a province: Maine, named "The Province or Countie of Mayne" in the charter granted by Charles I, was acquired by Massachusetts in 1691, and did not become a separate state until 1820.

Virgil's Cumæan: arriving in Italy, Æneas went at once to the Cumæan Sibyl, and from her begged permission to visit his father in the lower world. The lake, on the shores of which he was to offer sacrifice before descending, is thus described by Virgil:

> "There was a cavern deep with yawning jaws
> Enormous, stony, screened by a gloomy lake
> And shadowy woods: no wingèd thing could fly
> Unscathed above it, such the baleful breath
> That from the opening rose to the upper air."
>
> *Æneid*, VI, 294-298, *Cranch's translation.*

that of Scott's Caledonian Lady: Loch Katrine. Cf. *The Lady of the Lake.*

Kenelm Digby (1603-1665): an English philosopher, — especially a student of the occult sciences.

Empedocles: a Greek philosopher (490-430?) living in Sicily. He is said to have thrown himself into the crater of Ætna, so that, having thus suddenly disappeared, the people might believe him to be a god. Cf. Matthew Arnold's drama, *Empedocles on Etna.*

PAGE 2

Cousin Bull: John Bull; applied to any Englishman.

Jonathan: Brother Jonathan; applied to any American. Cf. Lowell's *Biglow Papers.*

Macheath: the hero of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera.*

PAGE 3

Horatian indifference: in contrast to Hamlet, Horatio takes with the same equanimity both the favors and the rebuffs of fortune.

nunc dimittis: the first two words of the Latin canticle of Simeon, beginning "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Cf. Luke ii, 29-32.

PAGE 4

Pincian: the hill in the northern section of Rome, from which is to be seen toward the west the famous view of St. Peter's and of the Campagna beyond.

Tancred: one of the heroes of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.* By the "Mystery of the Orient" Lowell may refer to the maiden warrior, Clorinda, whom Tancred first met in the disguise of her white armor. She appeared and disappeared fre-

quently afterward, fighting with the Pagan forces, and always Tancred pursued her to gain her love. Finally, in a battle where she dressed in a black armor instead, Tancred unknowingly killed her. The whole story may be read in Book XII.

Eumenides: in Greek mythology the avengers of evildoing. This form is euphemistic for *Erinyes*, and is equivalent to the Latin *Furiae* or *Dirae*.

PAGE 7

four rivers of Paradise: cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, II, 577-581.

> "Abhorrèd Styx, the flood of deadly hate;
> Sad Acheron of sorrow, black and deep;
> Cocytus, named of lamentation loud
> Heard on the rueful stream; fierce Phlegethon,
> Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage."

Pied Piper of Hamelin: the Pied Piper, according to the mediæval legend, freed the town of Hameln from a plague of rats by playing so enchantingly upon his pipe that the animals followed him to the river and were drowned. See Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin*.

PAGE 8

Sorbonists: the Sorbonne was founded in 1252, an institution connected with the University of Paris, and afterwards absorbing into itself the whole theological faculty of the University. During the Middle Ages and the Reformation period the Sorbonne was considered one of the highest authorities of the Christian church, and its decisions were appealed to in all theological controversies.

PAGE 9

Shenstone, William: English poet (1714-1763). The lines referred to were written by him on the window of an inn:

> "Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> The warmest welcome at an inn."

Johnson, Samuel: English critic, essayist, poet (1709-1784); the dominant, and the domineering, figure in English literature in the last half of the eighteenth century. Before quoting Shenstone's stanza Johnson had said: "There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." Boswell's *Johnson*, Vol. VI, Chap. iii (*London Edition*, 1835).

skull of Yorick: the skull of Yorick, the king's jester, is apostrophised by Hamlet: "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen?" *Hamlet*, V, i.

PAGE 10

Tityrus-like: Tityrus was a common shepherd's name among the Greeks. Virgil, in his first Eclogue, takes this name

to himself. Spenser speaks of Chaucer thus in his *Shepherd's Calendar:*

> "Goe, lyttle calendar! thou hast a free passeporte;
> Goe but a lowly gate emongste the meaner sorte:
> Dare not to match thy pype with Tityrus his style."

vetturino: driver.

PAGE 11

Procrustean: Procrustes, a robber famous in Greek legend, made a bed upon which he tortured his victims by stretching those who were too short to fit it, and cutting off to the proper length the limbs of those who were too long.

PAGE 13

island of Capri: this beautiful island, some twenty miles south of Naples, is in outline high and abrupt at either end, Monte Solaro being nearly 2000 feet high.

PAGE 14

Hellespont: named for Helle, of Greek legend, who, escaping from the wrath of her stepmother on the back of the ram of the golden fleece, fell into the strait between Europe and Asia.

Peloponnesus: the island of Pelops, grandson of Zeus.

PAGE 15

Canning: so Carlyle in *Heroes and Hero-Worship:* "King is Kön-ning, Kan-ning, man that *knows* or *cans*."

PAGE 16

auspex: the Roman priest who read the auguries from the examination of the birds slain for that purpose.

PAGE 17

Dodo: a practically extinct species of pigeon, surviving in the *Botany Bays*, outskirts or regions of banishment. The real *Botany Bay* is an inlet on the coast of New South Wales where England once established a penal colony.

PAGE 19

Columbaria: dovecotes.

Juan Fernandez: the island in the South Seas where lived for four years Selkirk, the Scottish sailor, who was supposed to be the original of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.

PAGE 21

Pretorian bands: the Roman emperors' body-guard; instituted by Augustus, and later of power enough to make and unmake emperors. The history of Sejanus is a dramatic illustration of their power.

Janizaries: bodies of Turkish infantry, constituting the Sultan's body-guard, and the main standing army; a turbulent body that often seized entire control of the government. When Constantine abolished the Pretorian guards, Sultan Mahmoud followed his example and suppressed the Janissaries.

Mamelukes: a corps of Egyptian cavalry, whose chiefs were, from the thirteenth until the eighteenth century, the sovereign rulers of the country.

Napoleon III: he chose December 2, 1851, the anniversary of Austerlitz and Napoleon I's coronation, to dispose of the National Assembly by force and to make himself absolute ruler. Although he was chosen by a large vote as President in the same year, and given the imperial title a year later, yet the day of tyranny was past, and the rest of his life was spent

in trying to maintain his rule over the liberty-loving spirit of France.

PAGE 22

Nemesis: in mythology Nemesis was the goddess of retribution.

nous: intellect, understanding.

PAGE 23

Welt-schmerz: pessimism.

PAGE 24

nil admirari: to wonder at nothing.

Tâtar: Chinese.

Johannes Taurus: Latin for John Bull.

PAGE 25

Cardinal Richelieu: celebrated French statesman (1585–1642), and principal minister of Louis XIII.

Pre-Raphaelite: the brotherhood of English artists which took this name originally consisted of Holman Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais; it had for its object "an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature."

Lethe: the river of oblivion in Hades.

PAGE 26

basia: *basium*, a kiss.

wongen: Chaucer has *wonyng* for "dwelling." Cf. *Prologue*, 606.

James Watt: the English inventor (1736–1819), who, as a boy, holding a spoon over the nose of a boiling kettle, discovered the power of steam.

PAGE 27

classic Everett: Edward Everett (1794–1865), a famous Massachusetts statesman and orator.

PAGE 29

Thundering Legion: according to legend, a Christian legion in the army of Marcus Aurelius, whose prayers for rain were answered by a thunder shower whose lightning killed the enemy while its rain refreshed the Romans.

Batavian elixir: East India rum from Batavia, a Dutch port on the northern coast of Java.

PAGE 31

Napier: the famous Scotch mathematician (1550–1617), who invented logarithms.

PAGE 32

laudari a laudato: to be praised by one who is himself praised.

Helen: according to one version of mythology, Helen was the daughter of Zeus and Leda, the swan.

Merlin: the prince of enchanters. His mother was a nun, and, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, his father a "guileful sprite," or an incubus, "half angel and half man, dwelling in mid-air between the earth and moon."

ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν: king of men, the Homeric epithet for Zeus.

A. M.: Master of Arts: **LL. D.**: Doctor of Laws.

PAGE 33

St. Mark: these four horses were brought from Constantinople to adorn the middle arch of the entrance to the basilica of St. Mark's. In Constantinople they had possibly topped a Roman triumphal arch.

Colleoni: the splendid equestrian statue of this famous Italian general stands before San Giovanni e Paolo.

sierra: the Spanish word for mountain range.

Zeus: cf. Iliad, Bk. XXII, 271–275 (Pope's translation):

> "Jove lifts the balances that show
> The fates of mortal men, and things below:
> Here each contending hero's lot he tries,
> And weighs, with equal hands, their destinies."

PAGE 38

salle-à-manger: dining-room.

PAGE 40

Hincks, Edward: an Irish Egyptologist (1792–1866).

Rawlinson, Sir Henry: a famous English archæologist (1810–1895), renowned for having deciphered the cuneiform inscription at Behistung which related in three different languages the events of the reign of Darius.

ruins of Nimroud: a rich field of ruins for the archæologist to study; about 20 miles south of Nineveh.

Greek Kalends: Kalends being the first of the month in the *Roman* calendar, the phrase "in the *Greek* Kalends" is equivalent to *never*.

PAGE 41

selva selvaggia: a savage wilderness.

forest of Arden: an English forest in Warwickshire; Lowell is obviously thinking of it as described (?) by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*.

Agassiz, Louis: a famous naturalist, especially an ichthyologist (1807–1873). See Whittier's *The Prayer of Agassiz*.

St. Jerome (345–420?): his chief work was done in Rome, where by his example of piety and asceticism, he won many followers. The foundation of his greatest fame rests upon his critical revision of the Latin translation of the Bible, begun in Rome and finished in Bethlehem.

MY GARDEN ACQUAINTANCE

PAGE 45

White's: Gilbert White (1720–1793); curate at Selborne, England, where he wrote his one famous book.

Oriel: one of the colleges of Oxford University.

Barrington, Pennant: characters in White's *Natural History of Selborne*.

Walton, Izaak (1593–1683): the author of *The Compleat Angler*, of which Lamb said, "It would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it; it would christianize every discordant angry passion."

Cowper, William (1731–1800): best known by his *Olney Hymns* and *The Task*. In the latter we find the lines:

> "I would not enter on my list of friends
> (Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
> Yet wanting sensibility) the man
> Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

PAGE 46

"**Annihilating all that's made**," etc.: quoted from *The Garden*, by Andrew Marvell (1620–1678).

Burgoyne: the English general who surrendered to the American forces at Saratoga, October 17, 1777.

Chartreuse: the original, La Grande Chartreuse, is a famous monastery in France. Lowell uses the word here to mean the equally sequestered home of Gilbert White, where he lived as secluded a life as any monk.

PAGE 47

Willoughby, Ray: two famous English naturalists, who were contemporaries of White.

PAGE 48

Windsor Castle: the royal residence of the English court.

Diogenes: the Greek Cynic philosopher, living about 350 B. C., who is reputed to have lived in a tub.

PAGE 50

Mercury, standing a-tiptoe: the pose of the beautiful Mercury, by Giovanni di Bologna, in the Bargello at Florence.

Barabas: the Jew of Malta in Marlowe's play by that name, from which the following line is quoted.

PAGE 51

M. C.: member of Congress.

cloaca maxima: the chief drain of ancient Rome.

mémoires pour servir: notes for reference.

By nature knew he, etc.: cf. Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, ll. 35, 36.

PAGE 52

So nature pricketh, etc.: the line actually reads, "So pricketh hem nature in hir corages;" cf. Chaucer's *Prologue*, l. 11.

PAGE 53

this summer: the date of this essay is given as 1869, but it evidently was not finished in that year.

Emerson's Titmouse:

> "For well the soul if stout within,
> Can arm impregnably the skin."

Bloomfield, Robert (1766–1823): an English shoemaker and poet, best known for his poem, *The Farmer's Boy*.

PAGE 54

Poor Richard: the pseudonym under which Benjamin Franklin printed his Almanac; the ethics of Poor Richard are somewhat on the "reward of merit" order, and have material prosperity always in view.

Dr. Johnson's: Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), the English poet and essayist. Cf. Macaulay's *Essay on Johnson:* "Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey."

White Hills: the White Mountains. Cf. Hawthorne's title, *Tales of the White Hills*.

Argos: principal city of Argolis, Greece; here used for the entire country.

PAGE 55

spies, as did the Jews: cf. Numbers viii, 15.

Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of (1769–1852): he made his early reputation fighting with the Portuguese against the French.

PAGE 56

Pecksniffs: Pecksniff is the notorious hypocrite in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

PAGE 58

Watts, Dr. Isaac (1674–1748): English hymn-writer and author.

"**To their unguarded nest**," etc.: cf. Shakespeare's *Henry V*, I, ii.

PAGE 60

Æsop: according to tradition, a Greek fabulist of the sixth century B. C.

PAGE 61

crow-blackbirds: see in *The Biglow Papers*:

> "Fust come the blackbirds clatt'rin' in tall trees,
> An' settlin' things in windy Congresses."

Shady Hill: the Cambridge home of Charles Eliot Norton.

PAGE 62

Saint Preux: the lover of Julie in Rousseau's novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

Kanakas: the aborigines of the Hawaiian Islands.

PAGE 63

Edward E. Hale: the author of *The Man without a Country*, and many other stories and papers; the friend of Lowell, and author of *James Russell Lowell and his Friends*.

PAGE 64

rapture of music: compare the charming lines in *Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line*:

> "June's bridesmaid, poet of the year,
> Gladness on wings, the bobolink is here."

PAGE 65

Opodeldoc, etc.: cf. Bryant's refrain in his *Robert of Lincoln*.

Figaro: a gay, lively character in several plays of Beaumarchais.

Gurowski (1805–1866): a Polish writer, long a resident of the United States, and once employed as translator in the State Department at Washington.

Dixon, William Hepworth (1821–1879): an English journalist.

Châteaubriand: see note, p. 82.

Fontanes, Marquis Louis de (1757–1821): a French politician and poet.

mes chevaux, etc.: my horses grazing at a distance.

PAGE 68

Sweet Auburn: Lowell refers to the beautiful cemetery on the edge of Cambridge and Watertown, and is echoing the beginning of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*:

> "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain."

Eheu, fugaces: Alas, they are fled! The quotation is from Horace's Odes, II, 14, "Eheu! fugaces labuntur anni."

PAGE 69

Fresh Pond: one of Lowell's favorite walks; not far from "Sweet Auburn." See note, p. 68.

gypsies of Ellangowan: in Scott's novel, *Guy Mannering*.

Longfellow's verse: cf. Longfellow's *The Herons of Elmwood*.

trouvaille: a find, — a God-send.

Kidd's treasure: Captain William Kidd was a notorious pirate, whose treasure is still occasionally sought.

PAGE 70

Wilson's thrush: named for Alexander Wilson (1766–1813), a Scotch-American ornithologist.

the Ancient Mariner: cf. Coleridge's poem for the passages Lowell has in mind.

Trasteverina: a dweller across the Tiber.

PAGE 71

Ovid: See note on p. 83.

Penn-treaty: a fair division, and a *laissez-faire* policy, such as William Penn made with the Indians.

PAGE 72

Hebraism: Lowell uses the word here as a synonym for Christian religion. "The uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience." *Matthew Arnold*.

Medford rum: from Medford, on the Mystic River, eastern Massachusetts.

A GOOD WORD FOR WINTER

PAGE 75

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792–1822): English poet, among whose greatest poems are *Prometheus Unbound*, *Alastor*, *Adonais*, *To a Skylark*, *Ode to the West Wind*, etc.; a lover of beauty, as is suggested by the quotation which Lowell uses here.

PAGE 77

Tupper, Martin (1810–1889): an English poet, whose chief work was entitled *Proverbial Philosophy*. It had at first a certain popularity, but before long its writer was the butt of the critics, and his name was a synonym for the commonplace.

PAGE 79

Lamartine, Alphonse de (1790–1869): a French writer, whose four volumes of poetry strike a monotonous note of almost morbid sentimentality and meditativeness. This was in poetry his only note; and although generously praised at first, even in his lifetime he was eclipsed by the vigorous school of Victor Hugo.

Heine, Heinrich (1799–1856): the greatest figure in German literature after Goethe and Schiller: most wonderful in his lyrics, which are often full of pathos. He has been called the "prophet of poetic pain," into whose soul the *Weltschmerz* had eaten deeply.

PAGE 80

Rousseau, Jean Jacques (1712–1778): a French philosopher, the tendency of whose thought was toward condemning civilization as tending toward a corruption of morals, and advocating a return to nature.

Petrarch, Francesco (1304–1374): the great Italian lyric poet from whom the Renaissance received one of its most powerful impulses. His fame rests chiefly upon the *Sonnets* dedicated to Laura. Chaucer says of his *Clerk's Tale* that it was

> "Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
> Fraunceys Petrark, the laureat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whose rhethorike swete
> Enlumined al Itaille of poetrye."

Mont Ventoux: a peak of the Alps in southeastern France.

PAGE 81

Clerk's Tale: one of *The Canterbury Tales*, told by the clerk of Oxford.

Claude Lorrain (1600–1682): a French landscape painter, whose canvases are remarkable for their careful arrangement and definiteness of detail, and for the sense of unlimited space they always give.

Salvator Rosa (1615?–1673): a painter of the Neapolitan school, who excelled in terrible battle pieces, and whose landscapes are always composed of gloomy grottoes, rocky precipices, shattered trees, and enveloped in an atmosphere of storm or gloom.

Gaspar Poussin (1613–1675): a French landscape painter, who gloried in portraying wind and storm, and the darkness of whose canvases has been only intensified by the lapse of time.

PAGE 82

Thomson, James (1700–1748): an English poet, whose greatest poem, *The Seasons*, is refreshing in its expression of pleasure in the simple things of nature. Wordsworth says further of him:

> "Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried:
> Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay,
> Made, to his ear attentively applied,
> A pipe on which the wind would deftly play;
> Glasses he had, that little things display,
> The beetle panoplied in gems and gold,
> A mailèd angel on a battle day;
> The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold,
> And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold."

St. Pierre, Bernardin (1737–1814): a French writer, best known as the author of *Paul et Virginie*.

Cowper: see note on p. 45. His greatest work, *The Task*, is in simplicity of theme and style far removed from formality and convention. In Book I of this work appears the oft-quoted line which expresses the spirit of his thought,

> "God made the country, and man made the town."

Châteaubriand, François (1768–1848): a French writer of some note. Although he produced no single book that can be called an enduring work of art, his prose is wonderful for its power of conveying the beauty and mystery of nature. He is sometimes called "The Father of the Romantic School." He had all the sentimentalism of Rousseau, and he claimed Byron as his pupil.

Wordsworth, William (1770–1850): among all English poets he is the great interpreter of Nature. Lowell evidently

had in mind here his greater poems, *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, in which one reads Wordsworth's faith in Nature as a kindly teacher, chastening and inspiring thoughtful men.

Byron, George Gordon, Lord (1788–1824): the English revolutionary poet, whose power of describing nature may well be seen in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III.

George Sand (1804–1876): nom de plume of Baroness Dudevant. A French novelist, in some of whose books, *La Petite Fadette*, for example, written while she was living quietly in the country at Berry, is to be found that idyllic portrayal of nature of which Lowell is speaking.

Ruskin, John (1819–1900): English essayist and critic, whose appreciations of the modern landscape painters in *Modern Painters* are in themselves great word pictures.

lettre de cachet: a royal warrant.

Bussy Rabutin, Roger de, Comte de Bussy (1618–1693): a French officer and author, whose *Mémoires* and *Lettres* are diverting reading.

PAGE 83

Ménage: Lowell probably refers to Gilles Ménage (1613–1692), the famous French philologist. In his *Ménagiana* might be found such a passage as Lowell speaks of here.

Wedgewood, Thomas: life-long friend and benefactor of Coleridge.

Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 B. C.–18 A. D.): a Roman poet, best known as author of *Metamorphoses*, who was exiled to Pontus about 9 A. D.

PAGE 84

Jubinal, Achille, French critic, and collector and editor of *Nouveau recueil de contes, dits, et fabliaux*, etc.

PAGE 85

Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65–8 B. C.): a Roman poet, best known for his Satires and Odes (*Carmina*). The quotation here reads, translated: "Heap high the wood upon the hearth and drive away the cold." Cf. Carmen IX, *Ad Thaliarchum*.

Roderick Random: a novel by Tobias Smollett, published in 1748. Lowell refers here to the scene at the inn described in chapter X.

Walton: see note on p. 45.

Cotton, Charles (1630–1687): an English poet, who furnished a second part, on fly fishing, to the fifth edition of Walton's *Compleat Angler*, in 1676.

Foot-note: But you, Winter, are full of snow, wind, rain, and hail; you deserve to be banished as an exile; to speak without flattery, plainly, Winter, you are nothing better than a villain.

Charles d'Orleans (1391–1465), the last of the mediæval poets; friend of Villon; composer of many charming rondels.

PAGE 86

Doctor Akenside (1721–1770): an English poet, best known by his *Pleasures of the Imagination*.

PAGE 87

Fallor? an et nobis, etc.: cf. Milton's Latin epigram, *In Proditionem Bombardicam*.

Goethe (1749–1832): German poet, dramatist, and prose writer; the greatest name in German literature. **Harz-reise im Winter**: A Journey through the Harz Mountains in Winter.

PAGE 88

Newton, John (1725–1807): Cowper's beloved pastor, who helped him in preparing and publishing the *Olney Hymns* in 1779.

PAGE 89

handy Latinism: both in the conception explained in the preceding lines and in the use of the term *inverted*.

elision: of the *e* in *the* and the *i* in *inverted*, making *the* and *in* one syllable.

Gray, Thomas (1716–1771): Gray's love of the "handy Latinism" is shown more in his odes than in the *Elegy*.

PAGE 91

consulate of the second Adams: John Quincy Adams (1767–1848); sixth President, and the son of the second President, John Adams. Hence, "consulate of the second Adams."

late laureate: Wordsworth was poet laureate from 1843 until his death, in 1850.

Dean Swift, Jonathan (1667–1745): English satirist, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tale of a Tub*, *The Battle of the Books*, etc.

skating-scene in the "Prelude": cf. Book I, 425–463.

Crabb Robinson (1775–1867): friend of Wordsworth, Lamb, Goethe, and others, allusions to whom fill his *Diary*, *Reminiscences*, *and Correspondence*, and give us some of our best glimpses of their personalities.

Général Février: General February.

PAGE 92

Grahame, James (1765–1811): author of *Wallace, a Tragedy*.

digging out paths: cf. *Snow-Bound*, ll. 66–80.

verses of Emerson: cf. *The Snow-Storm*.

tristis Hiems: the severe winter.

Barbe Fleurie: flowery beard.

PAGE 93

Gherardo della Notte: Gerard Honthorst (1592–1662), a Dutch painter, called Gherardo della Notte on account of his fondness for painting night scenes.

bourgeois: something common, vulgar.

J. H.: Lowell refers here to John Holmes, younger brother of the poet, who was a member of the famous whist club whose records were so faithfully kept by Lowell. Its most constant members were Mr. Lowell, Mr. Holmes, Mr. John Bartlett, compiler of *Familiar Quotations*, and Dr. Estes Howe, who married Lowell's sister.

Mrs. Battles: cf. Lamb's Essay, *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*. Her rule for the game was, "A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigor of the game." Lamb's name is *Battle* not *Battles*.

Euroclydon: the northeast wind; usually called Euraquilo, but cf. Acts xxvii, 14 (*Revised Version*).

"tumultuous privacy": cf. Emerson's *The Snow-Storm*, l. 9.

PAGE 94

"Great things doeth He," etc.: cf. Job xxxvii, 5.

Judd's "Margaret": Sylvester Judd (1813–1853), a New

England clergyman, whose *Margaret* is a romance not so widely read as it deserves to be.

PAGE 95

Chapman, George (1559–1634): an English poet, best known for his translation of Homer. Cf. Keats's *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*.

Pope, Alexander (1688–1744): the English poet, author of *Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, *Essay on Man*, etc., who worked from 1713 to 1725 on his translation of Homer.

Martial (43–104): the Latin poet from one of whose epigrams this line is quoted: "The thick fleece of the silent snowflakes."

Dr. Donne, John (1573–1631): English poet. The writings of Donne and his school were distinguished by fantastic turns of thought and phrase, sometimes happy and sometimes labored. The internal rhyme of *tacitarum* and *aquarum* is a device which would have pleased him.

Eustathius of Thessalonica: a Greek classical scholar of the twelfth century, whose commentary on Homer did much toward testing the genuineness of the text of his writings.

Godeau Antoine (1605–1672): a French poet, whom Mme. de Sevigné called "le plus bel esprit de son temps."

Lorsque la froidure, etc. When the inhuman cold robs the forests of their green beauty, it covers the fallow fields under thick snow, and the snow holds for them all the warmth of wool.

PAGE 96

"**doth pluck the masoned turrets**": cf. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, V, i.

Cowley, Abraham (1618–67): although considered even greater as a poet than Milton in his own day, he has steadily decreased in estimation; but he may still be wondered at for his ingenuity and skilfulness in fancy and phrase.

Notre Dame de la Neige: Our Lady of the Snow.

PAGE 97.

Phidias's journeyman: probably Lowell has in mind either Alcamenes, who was the most skilful of the pupils of Phidias and the artist of the centaur conflict on the west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, or Agoracritus, who was the favorite pupil of Phidias.

Poseidon: the god of sea storms.

PAGE 98

Bedouins: the nomadic Arabs in distinction from those who dwelt in towns.

honest Jacques: among the French, Jacques Bonhomme is a general name for a peasant.

PAGE 99

"**Chanticleer shook off the powthery snaw**": cf. Burns's *A Winter Night*, IX.

Ambrose Philips (1671–1749): an English writer, best known as the author of *The Distrest Mother*. He was nicknamed "Namby-Pamby," and the jealousy of Pope, who had already praised his "eminence in the infantile style," saw to it that the name clung to him.

PAGE 100

"**glorified sugar-candy**": "The boxes at that time, full

of well-dressed women of quality, projected over the pit; and the pilasters reaching down were adorned with a glistening substance (I know not what) under glass (as it seemed), resembling — a homely fancy — but I judged it to be sugar-candy — yet to my raised imagination, divested of its homelier qualities, it appeared a glorified candy!" Lamb's essay, *My First Play*.

Pepys, Samuel (1633–1705): famous as the author of the *Diary* (1660–69), which is one of the chief authorities on the period of the Restoration.

PAGE 101

Pentelicus: a mountain near Athens, famous for its marble.

Sisyphean toil: Sisyphus the crafty was condemned forever to roll up hill a huge stone, which at the top always rolled down again. Cf. Pope's translation of the *Odyssey*, Bk. XI:

> "With many a weary step and many a groan,
> Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone;
> The huge round stone, returning with a bound,
> Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground."

Cf. also Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, IV.

PAGE 102

Bramante (1444–1514): the great Roman architect who made the first plan for St. Peter's, — the one which was considered the best by Michael Angelo. The Court of the Loggia of the Vatican was his work.

Sansovino (1460–1529): a Tuscan sculptor and architect. His greatest work was probably the royal palace which he designed for King John of Portugal. The famous group, The Baptism of Christ, on the baptistry at Florence, is his work.

Radetsky (1766–1858): a famous Austrian field-marshal, who distinguished himself at Hohenlinden, Wagram, Aspern, etc.

Ball's Bluff: Lowell refers here to William Lowell Putnam, second lieutenant of the 20th Massachusetts regiment.

Fair Oaks: Lowell refers here to James Jackson Lowell, his nephew.

Cedar Creek: Lowell refers here to General Charles Russell Lowell, his nephew. In Scudder's *James Russell Lowell* and Hale's *James Russell Lowell and his Friends* may be found an account of the part these men played in the Civil War.

Vauban (1633–1707): a famous French engineer, who strengthened many of the fortresses on the frontiers of France, besides distinguishing himself by conducting sieges and building fortifications during the wars between France and Spain.

Vermont sculptor: probably Lowell refers here to Hiram Powers.

"O, that I were a mockery-king," etc.: cf. *King Richard II*, IV, i.

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Silberhorn: one of the Swiss Alps, near the Jungfrau.

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Alph: see Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, ll. 1–5.

Titania, Oberon: king and queen of the fairies in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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Agassiz: see note on p. 41.

Piranesi, Giovanni (1720–1778): a Roman engraver. His finest work was the engraving of some 2000 plates illustrating the antiquities and public buildings of Rome.

Thoreau, Henry David (1817–1862): the Concord naturalist, friend of Emerson.

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Moretum: a short poem, usually attributed to Virgil, although its authorship is doubtful.

PAGE 108

pot-au-feu: boiled meat and broth.

PAGE 109

Goody Blake: cf. Wordsworth's *Goody Blake and Harry Gill:* her curse was

> "God! who art never out of hearing,
> O may he never more be warm!"

and the result was

> "That evermore his teeth they chatter,
> Chatter, chatter, chatter still!"

Dr. Armstrong, John (1709–1779): an English physician and poet, his principal work being *The Art of Preserving Health*, — a didactic poem in four books, whose style may be easily imagined.

"**And, interrupting oft that eager game**," etc.: cf. *The Prelude*, Book I, 538–543.

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Demogorgon: the tyrant of the elves and fays. Spenser says he "dwells in the deep abyss where the three fatal sisters dwell." *Faerie Queene*, IV, 2.

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